

IMPLEMENTATION OF ALASKA'S PRIMARY SEAT BELT LAW

MAY 2006

ALASKA SEAT BELT FACTS

- May 1989: Alaska State Legislature passes a law requiring seat belt use by all occupants in a motor vehicle. Failure to wear a seat belt for anyone over 16 years of age is a secondary traffic violation.
- January 2006: Alaska State Legislature amends the seat belt law making it a primary traffic violation.
- January 31, 2006: Alaska Governor Frank Murkowski signs the primary seat belt bill into law.
- May 1, 2006: Alaska's primary seat belt law goes into effect.
- Primary seat belt law permits a law enforcement officer to stop a vehicle and issue a citation for a seatbelt violation even if it was the only violation observed.

ALASKA'S PRIMARY SEAT BELT LAW

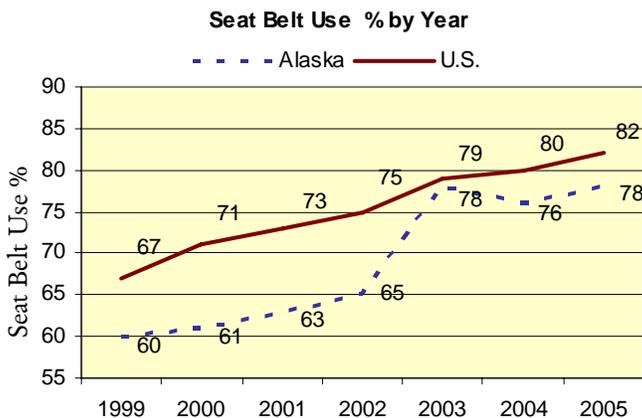
WHAT IT IS...

- It is a way to save an estimated seven lives, 102 serious injuries and \$29 million annually in Alaska. Nearly 75% of the costs of motor vehicle crashes are borne by people not involved through increased taxes, insurance premiums, medical, and legal costs.
- It is a no-cost way to increase seat belt use by Alaska's citizens. Use of seat belts is an effective and proven method to prevent death and injuries in motor vehicle crashes.
- It is a way to protect our families and friends from being killed or injured when an unbelted occupant is thrown around a vehicle following a collision.
- It is a way to decrease the fatality rate in Alaska. States with primary seat belt laws have consistently lower fatality collision rates than those states with secondary seat belt laws.

- *Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Americans ages 3-33. (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention)*
- *In 2004, 55% of Alaskans killed in motor vehicle crashes were not wearing a seat belt. Seat belts reduce the risk of death in a crash by 50%. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)*

WHAT IT IS NOT...

- It is not an infringement on personal rights. We live in a society where we all pay for the cost to treat individuals in need of medical care including those injured who were not wearing a seat belt. As citizens, we have the right not to pay for preventable death and injuries caused by those who choose not to buckle up.
- It is not a revenue-generating public policy. Law enforcement does not receive a direct benefit from seat belt citations and fines.
- It is not a quota program to get law enforcement officers to write more tickets. There is no place for quotas in professional policing.
- It is not a way for law enforcement officers to use the violation as a pretext to stop citizens to gain entry to their vehicles. There is no place in professional policing for biased policing. In states with primary seat belt laws, research has shown no evidence that seat belt enforcement has been used as a tool for biased policing.



Alaska trails the national average for seat belt use. Enactment of a primary seat belt law in other states has resulted in increased belt use rates of 7% to 9%.

WHAT CAN THE PUBLIC EXPECT BEGINNING MAY 1, 2006?

- A coordinated, statewide effort to boost compliance with the seat belt law. Law enforcement will be compassionate, consistent and fair when enforcing the law with the goal of changing the behavior of those citizens who do not buckle up.
- A public education campaign regarding the importance of buckling up and the strict enforcement of the seat belt law.
- An increase in seat belt citations. In other states, the increase in citations issued lasts four to six months following enactment of a primary seatbelt law.
- The beginning of a trend showing a decrease in death and injuries on Alaska's roads and highways.