



Traffic Safety Bulletin

We Serve and Protect

MAY 1991

LeRoy Martin, Superintendent of Police



The National Safety Council projects that there will be 350-450 traffic fatalities over the 1991 Memorial Day weekend. Therefore, it's no "accident" that the week of 20 through 27 May has been designated "Buckle Up America" week. Numerous studies indicate that, when used, lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatal or serious occupant injury by between 40 and 55 percent.

During this time we encourage all Department members and their families to make a concerted effort to become regular seat belt users. Don't do it because it's the law, do it because you care.

WHY SHOULD YOU ENFORCE SEAT BELT LAWS?

Seat belts can reduce deaths by 40 to 50 percent and serious injuries by 45-55 percent, when they are worn.

When asked about the effectiveness of seat belts, 88% of those surveyed said that belts save lives and reduce injuries, 70% said that the risk of getting a citation would make them buckle up. **Seat belt use in Illinois, however, is only 40%.**

In addition to reducing deaths and injuries, the economic costs of these accidents, \$74 billion, can also be reduced. We all contribute to these costs in one way or another through higher insurance rates, medical fees, taxes, etc.

FOR KIDS SAKE

Auto accidents are the leading cause of accidental deaths to children. Among children under the age of 5 years, about 650 are killed and 35,000 are seriously injured every year. Some parents think they can protect infants and young children by holding them in their laps. They cannot. In a 30 mph crash, a child weighing 10 lbs. may be thrown with a force of 300 lbs. In this case, if a parent is wearing a seat belt, the child will be torn from the parents arms and hurled into the dash or windshield. If the parent is unbelted while holding the child, both will fly forward with the probability that the child may be crushed between the parent and the dashboard.

Whether adults do or do not use safety belts is a conscious choice. Small children cannot decide for themselves to buckle up. They depend on their parents to protect them from harm, and make that decision for them. In Illinois, children under the age of 4 years must be secured in a child restraint device (Chap. 95 1/2-1104 IVC). Children 4 and 5 years old must be secured in either a car seat or seat belts (Chap. 95 1/2-1104a).

AIR BAGS ARE ON THE WAY

Soon the Department will receive 445 new squad cars which will have some new added safety features such as air bags and anti-lock brakes.

Anti-lock brakes prevent skidding in emergency braking situations. This allows the driver to have greater control over his vehicle.

Air bags, of course, inflate upon impact and prevent the driver from striking the steering wheel or windshield. It should be noted that air bags only provide supplemental protection in frontal crashes. They will not help you in a side or rear impact or rollover accident. **You must wear a safety belt for protection in all types of crashes.**