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Clover Connection

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AgriLife Extension urging Texans to Click It or Ticket

This year's Click It or Ticket Campaign will be May 22-June 4, which includes the Memorial Day weekend, and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is urging Texas drivers to buckle up.

Once again, the agency is supporting efforts by the Texas Department of Transportation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Texas Department of Public Safety and police and sheriff's departments across the state to save lives by promoting increased seat belt use.

"Taking time to buckle your seat belt is the single most important step you can take to protect yourself in a vehicle crash," said Bev Kellner, AgriLife Extension vehicle safety program manager, College Station.

Kellner said wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of dying by 45 percent for people in the front seat of passenger cars.

"They also reduce the risk of dying by 60 percent for drivers of pickups, because pickups are twice as likely to roll over as passenger vehicles," she said.

Kellner said Texas achieved a nearly 92 percent statewide seat belt use rate in 2016 per Texas Department of Transportation data. And according to the national Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the "Click It or Ticket" initiative in Texas saved 5,068 lives and prevented 86,359 serious injuries since its inception 15 years ago. It also saved more than \$19.3 billion in related economic costs from 2002 to 2016.

"This year, the campaign is focusing on wearing seat belts all the time, especially at night," Kellner said "Fifty-seven percent of fatal crashes in Texas happen at night. And last year, of all

crashes in Texas in which people died and weren't wearing a seat belt, 62 percent happened at night."

She said Texas law requires the driver and all passengers in a vehicle to be secured by a seat belt.

"Unbuckled adult drivers and passengers, even those in the back seat, can be fined and face court costs of up to \$250," she said. "Children younger than eight must be in a child safety seat or booster seat unless they are taller than 4-feet 9-inches."

Kellner also noted most people are not aware of the dangers posed by unbuckled backseat passengers.

"In a crash, they can become projectiles that are tossed around inside the vehicle, injuring or killing those in the front seat," she said.

Kellner said because this year's campaign time frame includes Memorial Day weekend — when many people take to the road to enjoy a long weekend — drivers can likely expect to encounter additional law enforcement activity, including seat belt and child restraint checks.

"These officers are not out there just to write tickets; they want to help prevent needless tragedies associated with vehicle crashes," she said. "It just takes a few seconds to buckle up and save your life. Buckling up isn't something to do just during Click It or Ticket. It's something every driver and passenger should do automatically each time they get into a vehicle – day or night."

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