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Clover Connection

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**What's free, takes just seconds, and prevents one of the leading causes of death?
Click It or Ticket Mobilization is May 21 – June 3, 2018**

Taking those few seconds to buckle your seat belt is the most crucial step you can take to protect yourself in a crash. Those few seconds can save your life and save your friends and family from having to go through a needless tragedy. Fortunately, most Texans now buckle up, but some groups of motorists continue not taking the message to heart by not consistently using their seat belts. The demographic of motorist most likely to be unrestrained are men and young adults, especially pickup truck drivers and their passengers. In 2016, the use of seat belts in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 14,668 lives of occupants ages 5 and older. Sadly, in 2016, there were 10,428 unbuckled passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in the United States.

In Texas, among teens ages 13-to-15 years old, 62 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were killed in traffic crashes were not using restraints in 2016. Nationally, among young adults 18-to-34 years old killed in crashes in 2016, more than half (57 percent) were completely unrestrained — one of the highest percentages for all age groups. And, men make up the majority of those killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes. In 2016, 65 percent of the 23,714 passenger vehicle occupants who were killed were men. It comes as no surprise that men wear their seat belts at a lower rate than women do — 52 percent of men in fatal crashes were unrestrained, compared to 40 percent of women.

Buckling up is not just important during the daytime. Between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. is when more crashes and fatalities happen. Crash stats from the Texas Department of Transportation show that the majority (57 percent) of fatal crashes in Texas happen at night. In 2017, of all Texas crashes in which people died and weren't wearing a seat belt, 57 percent of those happened at night as well. It is important to wear your seat belt, day and night, to be protected in the event of a crash.

Unbuckled passengers are also dangerous to others in the vehicle. In the event of a crash, the unbuckled passenger become a large projectile flying around the vehicle who can injure or kill other occupants in the vehicle — including those who are buckled up!

Here are some of the myths about seat belts:

- **Vehicle type:** There seems to be a misconception among those who drive and ride in pickup trucks that their large vehicles will protect them better than other vehicles would in a crash. The numbers say otherwise. Nationally, 61 percent of pickup truck occupants who were killed in 2016

were not buckled up. That's compared to 42 percent of passenger car occupants who were not wearing seat belts when they were killed. Regardless of vehicle type, seat belt use is the single most effective way to stay alive in a crash.

- Seating position: Too many people wrongly believe they are safe in the back seat unrestrained. Forty-seven percent of all front-seat passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2016 were unrestrained, but 57 percent of those killed in back seats were unrestrained.
- Rural versus urban locations: People who live in rural areas might believe that their crash exposure is lower, but in 2016, there were 13,732 passenger vehicle fatalities in rural locations, compared to 9,366 fatalities in urban locations. Out of those fatalities, 49 percent of those killed in the rural locations were not wearing their seat belts, compared to 46 percent in urban locations.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Passenger Safety Division reminds everyone that this year's "Click It or Ticket" Campaign is scheduled for May 21 – June 3, which includes Memorial Day weekend. During this time, extra law enforcement will be on the road day and night enforcing the seat belt and child restraint laws in an effort to save lives. Those officers are not out to write tickets, but instead want to help prevent the needless tragedy of motor vehicle accidents.

Remember: Buckle up day and night and save your life — not just during "Click It or Ticket," but every day of the year!

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