

August 1997 Wheels

Seatbelts increase your chance of remaining conscious in a crash

"Young, single male. Drives older vehicle frequently but has less than six years of driving experience. A real risk-taker who likes to defy authority."

This is not an ad from the telepersonals but the profile of a driver who neglects to wear a seatbelt.

Transport Canada began its annual national survey of seatbelt use in 1986. Volunteers conduct seatbelt counts in communities which are representative of each province across the country.

For a designated two-hour time period, participants count the number of drivers wearing seatbelts at particular intersections.

National average of seatbelt wearers is 91.9 per cent

The 1996 results show the greatest percentage of drivers wearing shoulder belts was in Newfoundland at 94.3 per cent. Saskatchewan was second at 94 per cent. The area with the lowest percentage of seat-

belt wearers was in the Yukon at 57.8 per cent. The national average was 91.9 per cent, showing a gradual but steady increase since the surveys began.

Seven provinces had averages above 90 per cent in the 1996 survey. This may be attributed to the enforcement of provincial fines and a demerit system on drivers who violate the law.

Half of all car accidents occur within 40 km of the home at a speed of 60 km/hr or less. For this reason, the excuse of not buckling up to go to the corner store doesn't cut it. Get into the habit of fastening your seatbelt.

Children under 40 pounds should be secured in car seats

A lap belt should be worn snug and low over the hips. Wear it underneath a long or heavy coat directly over the hips. If adjustable, a shoulder belt should leave an inch or two between your chest and the belt.

Pregnant women should protect an unborn child by wearing the lap and shoulder belt whenever they're

in the car. Put the lap belt low over the pelvic bones rather than against the stomach.

Secure yourself, secure your kids

It's the mandate of each province that children under 40 pounds be secured in car seats. Boosters are recommended for children between 40 and 60 pounds, although not required by law in all provinces. Buy your car seats in Canada to ensure they meet standards set by Transport Canada. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully for proper installation.

Wearing a seatbelt increases your chances of remaining conscious in a crash. Many people are afraid of being trapped in a vehicle by the belt, but the fact remains that a conscious person has a much better chance of escaping a burning vehicle.

Each province is working to raise both seatbelt awareness and the number of drivers who wear belts. It's time to buckle under the pressure. Seatbelts save lives.

For more information on other safety issues, call IBC at 1-800-387-2880.

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