

May 11, 2012

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Seat belts are strong, seat belts save lives. That's the message this year as law enforcement agencies across the state participate in the Click It or Ticket program, May 21 – June 3, 2012. Although officers enforce seat belt laws year-round, efforts are intensified over the Memorial Day holiday.

"The Burleson Police Department is always cognizant of the safety of those who live in and drive through our city," Commander Chris Havens said. "During campaigns like Click It or Ticket, we focus on educating those who are not aware of the seat belt laws so that we can possibly avoid tragedies."

On Dec. 31, 2011, a 31-year-old Burleson man and a 26-year-old Joshua woman were killed when the Volkswagen Passat the man was driving passed a witness at a high rate of speed on Burleson Boulevard. The man lost control of the car, which left the road. The Volkswagen appeared to go airborne, then landed and rolled. None of the three people in the vehicle (a 28-year-old man was also in the Volkswagen) were wearing seatbelts. All three were ejected. The surviving passenger was transported to a Fort Worth hospital.

Texas currently ranks seventh in the nation for overall seat belt use, and 93.7 percent of Texas motorists use seat belts according to the Texas Transportation Institute. Experts at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimate that the steady increase in seat belt usage in Texas over the past 10 years has resulted in 2,843 fewer traffic fatalities, 48,000 fewer serious injuries, and a savings to the state of more than \$10 billion in associated costs.

State law now requires that every person in a vehicle be secured by a seat belt whether riding in the front or back seat. Fines and court costs for failing to fasten seat belts can add up to \$250 or more.

Pickups account for one in four registered vehicles in Texas, and are twice as likely to roll in a crash. But, seat belt use among pickup drivers and passengers is at 91 percent for pickup drivers compared to 95 percent of other drivers. And, only 80 percent of truck passengers use seat belts compared to 92 percent of passengers in other vehicles.

In 2011, nearly 3,000 people died in fatal collisions on Texas streets and highways, and almost half were not buckled up. Wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injury by 45 percent for car occupants and 60 percent for light-truck occupants. So, buckle up!