Click it or Ticket Campaign Spotted in Rear View Mirror

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : May 17, 2010 at 9:46 am

GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY– As city, county and state law enforcement gear up for another statewide Click It or Ticket seat belt mobilization between May 24 and June 6, officers would be wise to take extra precautions with people who drive unbuckled at night. That’s because new research shows that nighttime unbuckled drivers are twice as likely as daytime buckled drivers to have criminal records for offenses that involve violence.

The Click It or Ticket seat belt patrols moved to the hours of darkness three years ago because the traffic death rate at night is four times higher. Officials also expected the research to show that nighttime unbuckled drivers have worse driving records, which proved true. The research also uncovered surprising findings about the criminal histories of nighttime unbuckled drivers.

Compared to people who drive during the day with their seat belt on, nighttime unbuckled drivers are:

Three times as likely to have a felony record.

Twice as likely to have a criminal record for offenses that involves violence.

Three times more likely to have a DUI on their record.

More than two times more likely to have a negligent or reckless driving violation on their driving record.

Worse driving records in general.

Researchers observed drivers pulling into gas stations in five Washington cities during a 24-hour period over the course of 18 months. The driving records and criminal records of 5,035 motorists were analyzed. Comparisons were made between those who buckle up and those who don’t,

and those who ride unbuckled during the day and at night. The research was conducted on contract through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Observational surveys of motorists were conducted during the day and at night to determine seat belt use rates. “We were very pleased to find that, despite the focus on nighttime unbuckled drivers, our statewide use rate during the day didn’t fall,” said Lowell Porter, Washington Traffic Safety Commission director.

In Grays Harbor County, law enforcement from the Grays Harbor County Sheriff’s Office, the Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Montesano, Elma, Ocean Shores, Cosmopolis and McCleary police departments and the Washington State Patrol will be conducting extra seat belt patrols during the nighttime hours from May 24 – June 6.

Washington has one of the highest seat belt use rates in the United States and has had since the Click it or Ticket Project began in 2002. The latest daytime observational survey showed seat belt use at 96.4%. The Click it or Ticket Project and the primary enforcement seat belt law resulted in a 21% drop in vehicle occupant deaths, from an average of 518 from 1995 to 2002, to an average of 410 from 2003 to 2009. During those same time periods serious injuries from traffic crashes dropped 25%.

“It is because of these intensive seat belt efforts, combined with other traffic safety efforts across the state, that we continue to have more than 100 fewer traffic deaths each year in Washington,” Porter said.

Medical costs from traffic crashes amount to more than $276 million each year. A research study conducted by Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center in Seattle found that an unbuckled motorist’s medical bills amount to $11,000 more per collision than that of a belted motorist, so improved seat belt use is not only saving lives, but also reducing medical costs from collisions.

For more information about the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, visit www.wtsc.wa.gov.