

## **Washington State Has Highest Seat Belt Use Rate in the Nation**

### **Local News**

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - There is yet another sign that Washington drivers are doing the right thing. A newly-released federal report shows that Washington State had the highest seat belt use rate in the nation in 2011 at 97.5 percent. This marks the seventh consecutive year Washington's seat belt use rate has been above 95 percent.

Darrin Grondel, Director of the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, was very pleased with the federal release of state numbers. "News like this makes me proud to be living in Washington. Safe roadways are a team effort that includes everybody using their seat belts because they know that seat belts save lives."

Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center estimates that wearing lap-and-shoulder restraints reduces a vehicle passenger's risk of dying in a crash by 61 percent.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released a report and table comparing seat belt use rates for all states and territories. The national average in 2011 was 84 percent.

Experts believe that traffic deaths are reduced by good public policy, well-built and maintained roads, and successful education and enforcement efforts. "Our troopers have placed a very high priority on seat belt violations," said WSP Chief John R. Batiste. "They see first-hand the results of not wearing seat belts and are extremely motivated to reduce these unnecessary injuries and deaths."

"I also want to thank the many city, county, and tribal police agencies who've joined us in this effort. It's only by working together that we can achieve such a positive change of behavior," Batiste added. The way states take the observation seat belt survey is changing, so the method will be uniform across the country. This may cause seat belt use rates to change next year.

More information about seat belts can be found in Target Zero, Washington's Strategic Highway Safety Plan.