

Adult Occupant Protection

Seatbelt Facts from the [Montana Department of Justice](#)



In 2004, 196 people died on Montana highways in crashes involving passenger vehicles. Over 70 percent of them—140 drivers and passengers—either **didn't use or improperly used their seatbelts.**

In all likelihood, most, if not all of the 96 people who were killed because they were partially or completely *ejected* would be alive today had they been wearing their seatbelts.

Buckling up on every trip—not just the long distance ones—can save lives. Not wearing a seatbelt doubles your chances of being seriously hurt in a crash. Remember that most accidents occur at speeds less than 40 miles per hour, often within 25 miles of home.

Seatbelts and air bags are meant to work *together* to keep drivers and passengers safe. The presence of air bags in a vehicle doesn't mean seatbelts are unnecessary.

In the United States, auto accidents are the leading cause of paraplegia (from damage to the spinal cord).

Montana Seat Belt Law: MCA 61-13-103 states that a driver may not operate a vehicle upon a highway in the state of Montana unless each occupant of a designated seating position is wearing a properly adjusted and fastened seatbelt...

Seat Belt Use in Montana*:

According to the [Most of Us](#) campaign, only about 80% of Montanans reportedly wear seat belts all of the time.

Each percentage-point increase represents 2.8 million more people buckling up (nationwide), approximately 270 more lives saved, and 4,000 injuries prevented annually [NHTSA, FY2003 Performance Plan, 2002].

In 2003, the State Traffic Safety Office of the Montana Department of Transportation reported that of the 232 highway fatalities that occurred that year only 28% (65 out of 232) were properly restrained.

The impact of traffic crashes to Montana's economy was \$780 million in 2003. This is an average of over \$800 for every citizen in Montana. These estimates cover wage loss, medical expense, insurance administration, and property damage costs.

The general public pays nearly 75% of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes, delays, and lost productivity [NHTSA, Economic Impact of Crashes, 2002].

*Unless otherwise cited, information was taken from State Highway Safety Office Montana Department of Transportation, Traffic Safety Problem Identification FY 2005, July 2004.

Motor Vehicle Crashes and Seat Belt Use in Lake County*

In 2003:

- **614** traffic crashes occurred in Lake County
- **335** people sustained injuries due to a motor vehicle crash
- **23** people were fatally injured
- **78%** of fatalities were not wearing seat belts

*Montana Department of Transportation

Seat Belts and Pickup Trucks

Only 69% of pickup truck drivers and passengers wear their safety belts, yet in 2002, nearly 50,000 persons nationwide were injured in pickup truck rollovers.

“NHTSA focus group studies of young, male pickup truck drivers in rural areas indicated there are numerous obstacles to overcome in convincing these drivers to buckle up. Such obstacles include: the false belief that being unbelted in a crash is actually safer than being belted; social norms that discourage belt use; a fatalistic view of life; feeling safer in a truck versus a passenger car; and the belief that wearing a safety belt is a personal choice and should not be mandated by law” (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2003 “Safety Belts and Rural Communities—2003 Report)

The most common crash scenario on Montana roadways is the single vehicle rollover, and pickup trucks are twice as likely to roll over as passenger cars.

For more information about pickup trucks and seat belt use, go to <http://www.buckleupinyourtruck.com>

