

A KILLER IN INDIAN COUNTRY

[Hannah Nez] The seat belt and car seat did save my children's life and I'm very grateful.

[Dr. Frieden] Road crashes and the injuries and deaths they cause are preventable. You can stay safe on the road by wearing seat belts whenever you're in the car, making sure that young children are in a car seat or booster seat that's the right size for their age and weight and choosing never to drink and drive. The sad reality is that American Indian and Alaska Natives use seat belts and child safety seats less often, and are involved in more alcohol-related crashes than any other group. This results in a much greater risk of injury and death on the road. More than three out of every four passengers who died in crashes on reservations weren't wearing a seatbelt.

[Announcer] Today, American Indians and Alaska Natives suffer the highest death rates of any ethnic group in the United States from motor vehicle crashes.

[CAPT Nancy Bill] Motor vehicle crashes take more lives in American Indian and Alaska Native communities- even more than homicides and drowning.

[Announcer] Car crashes are the number one killer of tribal people between the ages of 1 and 44. Captain Nancy Bill personally witnessed their devastating effects while growing up on the Navaho reservation.

[CAPT Nancy Bill] Seeing all the injuries and fatalities really impacted not only myself personally as a family also my relations and even neighbors that lived in and around my community."

[Announcer] In 2006, Captain Bill's daughter and two grandchildren were involved in a motor vehicle crash in Gallup, New Mexico.

[CAPT Nancy Bill] As she was returning home she was rear ended by another vehicle. Her car was totaled. The positive thing was that she and the two children . . . did not receive any injuries. She was wearing her seatbelt. Her two children, a two year-old and four year-old, were buckled in car seats.

[Announcer] The good news is that you can help keep yourself and your passengers safe. One sunny morning, Hannah Nez headed to the bank with her two young children safely secured in the back seat.

[Hannah Nez] The first thing I saw when I was about to crash was the semi on the right side was coming into my lane. my heart started to race really fast and my son was only ten months old and my daughter was ten. I tried to honk, I don't remember if I honked or not and I slammed my brakes on. After we got hit, there was people in the surrounding area that came out and brought us water and helped me take the kids out of the car.

[Announcer] You can be the solution to help curb injury and death from motor vehicle crashes.

[Hannah Nez] I learned the importance of having the car seat in my car, because children can't be replaced. And cars can be purchased easily and you have to protect the things that are the most important to you.

[Announcer] Buckling up our children in the right car seats and booster seats is the most important step we can take to protect them on the road.

[CAPT Nancy Bill] My message also to tribes is that we have actually a responsibility as parents, as caretakers, grandmothers, as like me, to really look after the future generation.

[Announcer] You can be the solution to help curb injury and death from motor vehicle crashes.”

[Dr. Frieden] These crashes are a real threat to the health and well-being of tribal people not only in this generation, but for future generations. Fortunately, you can stay safer on the road. Wear a seatbelt every time, never drink and drive and make sure your kids are in the right size booster seat.