

Most Important Driving Device – SEAT BELT

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It is certain now that the first vehicle crash involves the vehicle and wearing a seat belt is a brake to keep a driver from the second crash — you are going the speed of the vehicle and hitting an object or objects until finally coming to a stop. Research has also shown that seat belts will keep you from having a third crash — your brain hitting your skull and turning into a soupy substance or your heart going through your rib cage like being stabbed with knives. More South Carolinians are now wearing seat belts.

A recent survey that Corporal Joe Hovis shared is that approximately 93 percent of South Carolinians are wearing seat belts. However, the seven percent who do not wear seat belts are among the 50 percent of fatalities in traffic crashes! The problem? People who do not wear seat belts in South Carolina know that the fine is only up to \$25. The answer? We need a better deterrent to encourage people to wear seat belts. How? Raise the fine! Other states have done so with better success. For example, in addition to the District of Columbia where fines are \$50 and 2 points, several states have higher fines — NC, \$25, plus \$153 district costs; FL, \$35 and 3—4 points; GA, (Bill 226), \$75 and \$125 for child 8—17 unbuckled; DE, \$97; TX, \$25—250, plus misdemeanor charge; CA, \$162 and \$490 for unbelted child under 16; and Oregon, \$162 and \$490 for unbelted child under 16. May South Carolina consider raising the fine and adding points for a seat belt violation!

Seat belts are critically important. A collision's force of impact can only be realized by watching slow motion photography or by seeing totaled vehicles. Would you believe a crash at 55 mph without wearing a seat belt is like a free fall from a 15-story building (University of California, "Broken Glass")? Would you believe a crash at 40 mph is 16 times worse than a crash at 10 mph (squaring of speed)? Would you believe that more than half of the crashes causing injury or death happen at speeds of less than 40 mph and within 25 miles of home (ADTSEA)? Multiply your weight by whatever speed you think you would drive to get an idea of some of the forces involved.

No matter how good a driver you are, you are at the mercy of other drivers— and just who can you trust? Corporal Hovis mentioned that in Troop 3 (Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg counties) there can be 50 traffic collisions in one day. He also mentioned that in snowy and icy conditions there can be up to 150 crashes in one day! To be sure, you cannot ride a roller coaster without a safety belt, and you cannot fly in an airplane without a safety belt. You should not ride in a vehicle without a seat belt!

A seat belt is a life belt that will keep you behind the wheel so you can control the vehicle in a crash. May we never be caught dead without a safety belt— because we could be caught DEAD without it!

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