



March 15, 2005

## **Rural Albertans are saving lives by buckling up**

Edmonton... Results of a 2004 survey show rural Albertans are buckling up more than ever before.

The survey found that 87 per cent of drivers and passengers observed at sites throughout rural Alberta in June 2004 were wearing their seat belts - an 11 per cent increase in seat belt compliance compared to 2001 and an 18 per cent increase compared to 1999. The survey was conducted at 374 sites by more than 700 volunteers who observed drivers and passengers in 72,160 vehicles.

"Protecting our health goes beyond making healthy choices at the grocery store. It also involves taking common sense steps to prevent injury by wearing our seat belts," said Iris Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness. "These results demonstrate how a coordinated, inter-agency approach can help Albertans improve road safety."

Highlights of the survey include:

- Female drivers (93 per cent) were more likely to wear their seat belts than male drivers (84 per cent).
- Drivers of minivans (93 per cent) and passenger cars (91 per cent), were more likely to buckle up than drivers of pick-up trucks, who had the lowest rate of compliance (82 per cent).
- Seat belt use in pick-up trucks has increased from 60 per cent in 1999 to 81.7 per cent in 2004.

"This is great news for traffic safety experts and advocates, as well as Albertans in general," said Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "These results are encouraging, and tell us that most Albertans make the right choice in buckling up."

The survey also found that those who stopped at a controlled intersection were more likely to be wearing a seat belt (89 per cent of drivers and 85 per cent of passengers) than those who failed to stop (83 per cent of drivers and 78 per cent of passengers).

Research has established that, in collisions, the effectiveness of seat belts in preventing death or serious injury to occupants of light-duty motor vehicles ranges from 39 per cent to 60 per cent, depending on vehicle type and size, and seat position. This means that for every 100 unbelted occupants who died in a given year, up to 60 may have lived if they had simply worn their seat belts.

"The issue has always been safety," Said Commanding Officer Bill Sweeney, Assistant Commissioner of RCMP "K" Division. "Our objective is to reduce injuries and save lives, and one of the best ways to do that is to ensure everyone buckles up."

The 2004 survey provides traffic safety stakeholders additional data and research from which effective interventions and programs will continue to be developed.

Partners in the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program include Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research; Alberta Health and Wellness; Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation; Insurance Bureau of Canada; KIDSAFE Connection; Calgary Police Service; Edmonton Police Service; municipal police

services; Regional Health Authorities; Royal Canadian Mounted Police; St John Ambulance; and Transport Canada.

The main objective is to achieve a seatbelt usage rate of at least 95 per cent in the province by 2010.

Complete survey results can be found at: [www.health-in-action.org/aorp](http://www.health-in-action.org/aorp)

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