

*March 25, 2011*

## **Albertans reminded about importance of wearing seat belts**

*Edmonton* ... Using a seat belt is a simple and effective safety measure, and one important way to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities occurring on Alberta's roads. Albertans are encouraged to share this message with friends and family as part of occupant restraint month.

Seat belts save about 1,000 lives per year in Canada. Wearing a seat belt also reduces the likelihood of sustaining an injury and decreases the severity of an injury. Collision-involved restraint users had a much lower injury rate (seven per cent) than those not using restraints (31.7 per cent).

Even in a low-speed crash, a person not wearing a seat belt hits the inside of the vehicle with a force many times their weight. People inside the vehicle can be thrown within or thrown from the vehicle.

To help improve safety on our roads, Albertans are being reminded to wear a seat belt and to encourage their friends and family members to wear seat belts. "Save a friend," a new awareness campaign launched earlier this month by the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program, is encouraging Albertans to save the life of a loved one by reminding people to wear a seat belt. The program invites Albertans to visit [www.saveafriend.ca](http://www.saveafriend.ca), where they can create a reminder using their favourite photograph and email the reminder to a friend or family member.

Regional traffic safety consultants will also be reinforcing the need to use seat belts through initiatives in communities throughout Alberta. These traffic safety consultants will be giving presentations, offering child safety seat clinics and writing articles for weekly newspapers to remind Albertans in their regions of this important safety measure.

During a province-wide seat belt and child safety seat enforcement blitz held March 21, 22 and 23, 1,256 violation charges were issued for seat belt infractions or child safety seat infractions. An additional 1,662 tickets were issued for various other traffic safety violations. Officers with the Edmonton Police Service, Calgary Police Service, Lethbridge Regional Police Service, Medicine Hat Police Service, Integrated Traffic Units (RCMP and Sheriffs) and Commercial Vehicle Enforcement participated in this coordinated enforcement initiative.

The fine for not wearing a seat belt is \$115. Drivers are also subject to a \$115 fine for each unrestrained passenger who is under the age of 16 years. In Alberta, child safety seats are required by law for children younger than six years of age who weigh less than 18 kilograms (40 pounds). A child should be secured in the appropriate safety seat or a booster seat, depending on the child's age and weight, until they reach nine years of age or weigh more than 36 kilograms (80 pounds).

The initiatives support Alberta's Traffic Safety Plan, which focuses on making our province's

roads safer through education, enforcement, community engagement and legislation.

More information about seat belts, their importance and their proper use is available at [www.transportation.alberta.ca](http://www.transportation.alberta.ca) and [www.albertaseatbelts.ca](http://www.albertaseatbelts.ca). To find your local traffic safety consultant, visit [www.saferoads.com](http://www.saferoads.com) and click on contact us.

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