

Safety Belt Use in Colorado

Fact Sheet by the
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

- In Colorado, **282** drivers and passengers were killed in 2004 as a result of not wearing their safety belt; **29** of these passengers were children.
 - It is estimated that if Colorado passes a standard enforcement safety belt law, safety belt usage will **increase 11-14 percent**, helping save **51 lives** and preventing **626 serious injuries** in the first year.
 - Using preliminary data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), the Colorado State Patrol reported that 96 teen drivers and passengers ages 16 to 20 died in 2004. **Nearly two-thirds of the teenage victims were not using safety belts.**
 - Traffic crashes around the country are estimated to result in **\$17 billion in medical care and emergency services, and \$107 billion in lost productivity and property loss.** Many of these costs are passed onto society: **85% of all medical costs of crash victims are paid by the public.**
 - Research has found that lap/shoulder belts, when properly used, **reduce the risk of fatal injury** to front seat passengers **by 45 percent** and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent.
 - When states adopt standard enforcement laws, driver death rates **decline by an estimated 7 percent.**
 - Statistics indicate that **six out of 10 children who die** in crashes are **not wearing safety belts.**
 - **Teen safety belt use rates in states with strong belt laws are consistently and significantly higher.** Teen (ages 16-20) safety belt use in Colorado is 70.9 percent compared to 79.3 percent in adults.
 - Driver restraint use is the strongest predictor of child restraint use. **In Colorado, when a driver is buckled, restraint use for juveniles (ages 5-15) was 84.7 percent and child restraint use was 89.9 percent.** If the driver was **NOT** wearing a safety belt, juvenile safety belt usage was only **22.1 percent** and child restraint use was only **65.0 percent.**
 - For the time period 1998-2001, in Colorado, the **average interval hospitalization charge was \$17,143 for safety belt users compared to \$24,467 for non-users.** After controlling for pertinent factors (year of hospitalization, survival vs. death during hospitalization, injury severity, payment source, etc.) the average hospital charge for each safety belt non-user was \$4,635 higher than for safety belt users. This means **the total burden for the four-year time period was \$25,418,340 in additional hospital charges for the non-safety belt wearers.**
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- ➡ When a safety belt law has standard enforcement, more people buckle up.
 - ➡ When parents buckle up, they're more likely to buckle up their children.
 - ➡ The reduced injuries and fatalities resulting from standard safety belt enforcement could mean a \$154 million reduction in related costs each year for Colorado.