

Traffic Safety Facts

Traffic Tech – Technology Transfer Series

May 2004 *Click It or Ticket* Seat Belt Mobilization Evaluation

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign of the National Safety Council, in conjunction with thousands of State and local law enforcement agencies, conduct annual national seat belt mobilizations. Because a large number of States currently use the *Click It or Ticket* slogan (over 30), these national mobilizations were often referred to as *Click It or Ticket* campaigns. In May 2004, the seat belt mobilization included a two-week high-visibility enforcement blitz, running from May 24th through the Memorial Day holiday.

Paid Media Activity

Two major types of media buys occurred for the May 2004 mobilization. First, States used nearly \$20 million in TEA-21 grant funding to purchase local television, radio, and print media advertisements. Second, the Federal Government released roughly \$12 million for a national media buy. Media content carried an enforcement centered message that was clear and to the point (e.g., if you're not wearing a seat belt you will receive a ticket). Of the media types, television was predominantly used. Radio was used to a lesser extent.

An additional paid advertisement, targeting seat belt use among pickup truck occupants, was aired for two weeks across five south-central States: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The advertisements were timed to occur just before May mobilization activities.

High Visibility Enforcement

Approximately 7,515 law enforcement agencies across the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and two U.S. Territories reported on May mobilization activities. They reported 657,305 seat belt citations during the enforcement period. States with primary seat belt use laws issued tickets at a greater rate per resident than States with secondary laws.

Seat Belt Use Changes

Immediately after the May mobilization paid media and high-visibility enforcement concluded, the States measured overall

front seat occupant seat belt use and compared these rates to the 2003 rates. Among the 50 States and the District of Columbia, the number that increased in belt use far exceeded the number that decreased (42 States versus 7 States; 2 States remained unchanged). See Table 1.

Table 1: Change in Statewide Belt Use (2004 versus 2003)
Number of States/territories reporting by law type

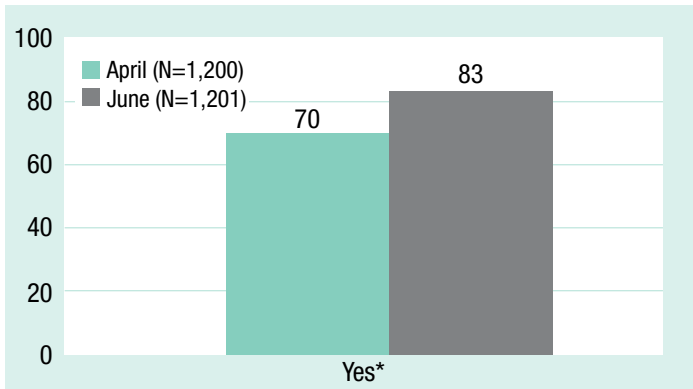
	Improved	Did Not Improve
Total (51)	42	9
Primary law (21)	17	4
Secondary law (30)	25	5

Statewide survey results averaged across the 50 States and the District of Columbia measured seat belt use in 2004 at 79 percent, a 2.4-percentage-point increase from 2003 (76.6 %). Like previous years, the 2004 seat belt use rates in primary law locations generally measured higher compared to secondary law locations. While gains in seat belt use were measured in both primary law and secondary law locations, the group of primary law locations continued to measure 12 percentage points higher (2003, 83.8% versus 71.6%; 2004, 85.9% versus 74.1%).

Telephone Survey Results

The national telephone survey included 2,401 respondents, with 1,200 respondents in the pre-wave, 1,201 in the post-wave. Results indicated that respondents became more aware of high-visibility enforcement efforts directed at seat belts. Pre/post survey results also indicated that respondents perceived an increase in high-visibility enforcement activity towards seat belt use (See Figure 1). Two measures of perceived high-visibility enforcement increased over the course of the mobilization and more motorists claimed "police in their communities were writing more tickets now than before" and a "ticket for nonuse was more likely now than before."

Figure 1: Past 30 Days, Seen or Heard of Special Police Efforts Toward Seat Belts



The Buckle Up in Your Truck Program

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, conducted a special two-week paid advertisement campaign immediately preceding their May mobilizations titled *Buckle Up in Your Truck*. This campaign delivered a safety message emphasizing the importance of seat belts to prevent ejection during vehicle rollovers.

Observational surveys of seat belt use tracked the seat belt usage rate before, during, and after the May program and the *Buckle Up in Your Truck* program. The surveys found a minimal increase in belt use one week after the *Buckle Up in Your Truck* ad spots began airing (+2 percentage points for occupants in pickups; +1 for occupants in passenger cars). A larger increase was measured soon after the high-visibility enforcement part of *Click It or Ticket* concluded. Pickup truck occupant belt use measured 8 points higher as compared to the baseline observations. Comparably, belt use for passenger car occupants measured 6 points higher.

Seat Belt Use in Pickup Trucks Increases in Amarillo, Texas

The Texas Department of Transportation chose Amarillo to further test the effectiveness of *Buckle Up in Your Truck* paid publicity and community outreach. Wichita Falls was selected as a comparison community. Amarillo received an unprecedented level of *Buckle Up in Your Truck* paid advertisement publicity during November 2004; Wichita Falls received no *Buckle Up in Your Truck* paid publicity. This was the first time that paid publicity was purchased specifically to reach pickup truck occupants in the Amarillo market area. Both communities received some *Click It or Ticket* publicity.

Observational surveys measured a dramatic increase in seat belt use in Amarillo compared to Wichita Falls. Increases were greatest among pickup truck occupants (+12) in Amarillo, narrowing the car-pickup truck disparity in seat belt use by 4 percentage points. See Table 2.

**Table 2
Percentage Point Change in Seat Belt Use; Buckle Up in Your Truck – Amarillo, November 2004**

Site		Baseline	Post	Diff.
Amarillo, TX (N=2,400)	Car	81%	89%	+8
	Pickup	72%	84%	+12
Wichita Falls, TX (N=2,400)	Car	84%	88%	+5
	Pickup	77%	82%	+5

Discussion

Approximately \$30 million was spent on advertising high-visibility enforcement messages nationwide during the *Click It or Ticket* mobilization. Law enforcement across the Nation issued more than 650,000 seat belt tickets during a two-week high-visibility enforcement phase. Belt use increased in 41 of 50 States and in the District of Columbia. Observational surveys also showed increased belt use among pickup truck occupants targeted with a special seat belt campaign.

Driver surveys indicated that there was a high awareness of media messages and that the *Click It or Ticket* slogan gained much attention. Results also indicated that over the past few years and the course of several national mobilizations, support for tough seat belt laws and high visibility enforcement remains strong.

This evaluation confirmed that intensive, short-term, and well-publicized high-visibility enforcement can produce gains in seat belt use. Every year, increased seat belt use saves billions of dollars in costs to society, and saves lives and prevents injuries.

How to Order

For a copy of **May 2004 Click It Or Ticket Seat Belt Mobilization Evaluation** (29 pages plus appendices) write to the Office of Behavioral Safety Research, NHTSA, NTI-130, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington DC 20590, send a fax to 202-366-7096, or download from www.dot.gov. Linda Cosgrove, Ph.D. was the contract manager.