

# Washington's Seat Belt Use Rate Jumps in 2010

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## ***Biggest improvement in years***

Results from the latest observational survey of seat belt use in Washington were released today and they show that the use rate has jumped to 97.6 percent. This use rate is expected to be one of the highest in the nation.

Washington saw an improvement of 1.2 percent from last year's seat belt use rate of 96.4 percent.

"The closer we get to 100 percent seat belt use, the more difficult it becomes to realize higher use rates," said Lowell Porter, Director of the Washington Traffic Safety Commission. "To jump from 96.4 to 97.6 percent is truly a significant improvement that moves Washington closer to its goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030."

Washington's traffic safety goals, strategies and tactics are found in Target Zero, the state's strategic highway safety plan, developed by 85 Tribal Nations, not-for-profit organizations, private industry, community groups, and federal, state and local agencies.

"These last few percentage points represent people who have simply not gotten the message about the value of seat belts," said State Patrol Chief John R. Batiste. "It appears that enforcement is the only way to win their compliance, and we will not hesitate to use that tool."

The State Patrol cites about 47,000 people annually for failing to buckle up.

A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that for people killed or injured in traffic crashes, medical and lost productivity costs totaled \$99 billion nationwide. Of that, \$58 billion pertained to people who were killed.

"What's much sadder than the monetary cost is the pain and anguish so many families go through," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "People can prevent a lot of that by remembering to buckle up — especially young people. Teens have the lowest rates of seat belt use, so they can do a lot on their own to reduce deaths and injuries."

Each year a nationwide observational seat belt survey is conducted. During the 2010 survey in Washington, observers recorded seat belt use by 94,436 vehicle drivers and passengers. It was conducted statewide on a variety of road types following research protocols established by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

“The increase of 1.2 percent in the past year means that one third of non-users in 2009 became seat belt users in 2010, truly an amazing accomplishment given that Washington has maintained one of the highest seat belt use rates in the nation for so many years,” said Dick Doane, Research Investigator with the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

In recent years the seat belt use rate in Washington has been:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Rate</i>
2005	95.2%
2006	96.3%
2007	96.4%
2008	96.5%
2009	96.4%
2010	97.6%

To learn more about Target Zero, visit [www.targetzero.com](http://www.targetzero.com).