

**MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
NEWS RELEASE
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13 OF 18 MOTORISTS KILLED IN JANUARY NOT BUCKLED UP

Deadly Trend Follows December When 5 of 23 Motorist Fatalities Were Belted

ST. PAUL — For the second consecutive month, lack of seat belt use factored in a majority of Minnesota traffic deaths. In January, 13 of the 18 motorists killed were not buckled up, according to preliminary Department of Public Safety (DPS) [Office of Traffic Safety](#) crash data. In December, only five of the 23 motorists killed were belted.

“These fatalities only emphasize the point that if you don’t buckle up, you are giving up the best defense you have to stay safe in the case of a crash,” says Lt. Eric Roeske of the [Minnesota State Patrol](#).

Officials say the unbelted deaths are factoring for the increase in deaths compared to this time in 2011. In January 2012, there were 19 deaths compared to 11 in 2011.

Most of the January unbelted deaths occurred in Greater Minnesota counties — where belt compliance is historically low: Benton, Cass, Crow Wing, Faribault (2), Goodhue, Kandiyohi, Otter Tail, Rock, St. Louis, Wadena and Winona. One unbelted fatality occurred in the Twin Cities area (Dakota County).

Four of the unbelted victims were under age 30, six were ages 30–54, and three were 55 and older.

In Minnesota it’s the law for [drivers and passengers in every seat to be belted](#).

Each year, more than half of the motorists killed in Minnesota crashes aren’t belted — translating to more than 150 deaths and 400 serious injuries annually. Eighty percent of the unbelted deaths occur on Greater Minnesota roads.

Seat Belt Facts and Tips:

- Seat belts restrain motorists in the vehicle’s designed protective space, giving them room to live in the event of a crash. Seat belts also keep drivers correctly positioned behind the wheel.
- In rollover crashes, unbelted motorists are usually ejected from the vehicle — in most cases, the vehicle will roll over them. In less severe crashes, an unbelted motorist may crack teeth out on the steering wheel or break their nose, and even slam into and injure others in the vehicle.

- Wear lap belts low and snug across the hips; shoulder straps should never be tucked under an arm or behind the back — not only is this unsafe, it is illegal.
- Children under age 13 should always ride in the back seat. Children who have outgrown a forward-facing harness restraint should ride in a [booster seat until they are 4-feet 9-inches tall.](#)
- Pregnant women should wear the lap belt under the stomach, as low on the hips as possible and against the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest between the breasts.
- Airbags are designed to work with seat belts to keep vehicle occupants in a safe position during a crash — airbags are not effective when the motorist is not belted.

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