



90% Belt Use

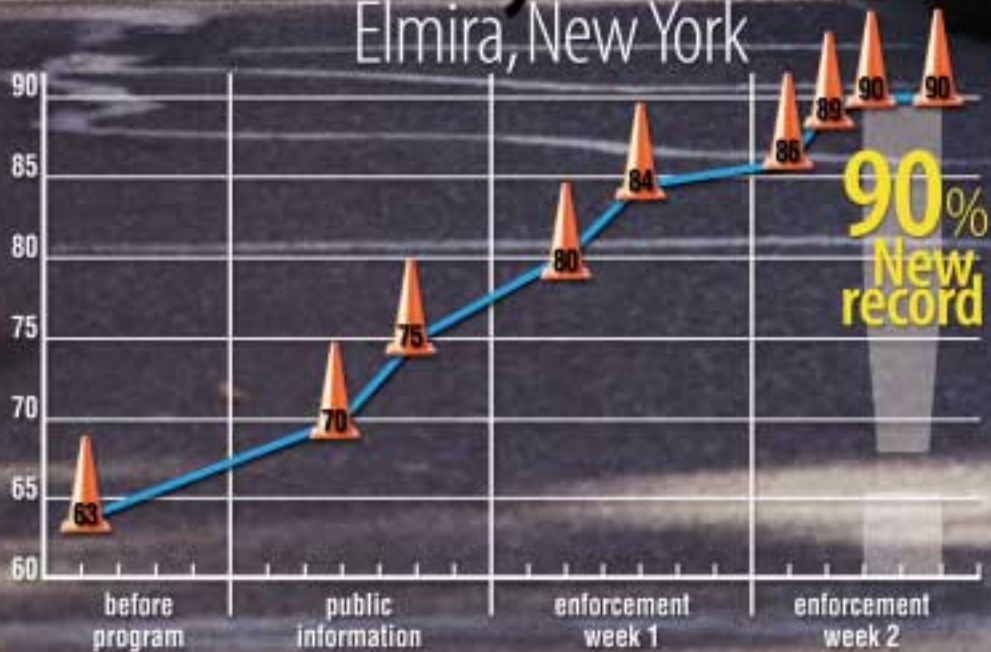


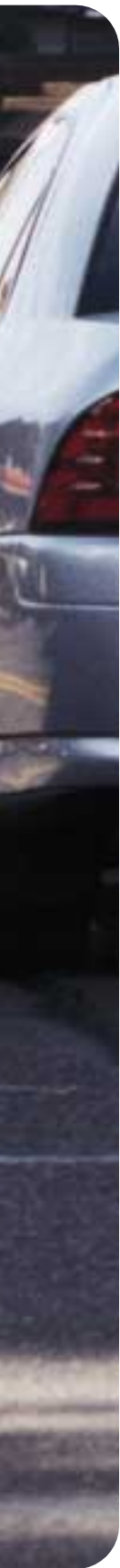
Successful STEP
How to boost belt use like they did in Elmira, New York



Percent Safety Belt Use

Elmira, New York





Buckle Up NOW!, a Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) in Elmira, New York, used highly publicized, enhanced enforcement to create the perception of a nearly certain risk of being stopped for not using a safety belt.

Cosponsored by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, this STEP achieved 90 percent belt use in a short time by incorporating the following elements:

- community coalition spearheaded by law enforcement leaders
- intensive enforcement of a primary belt law
- publicity emphasizing enforcement
- careful sequencing of program elements
- feedback on enforcement results and progress toward belt use goal

Buckle Up NOW! differs in several respects from earlier STEPs, which first were implemented in the 1980s. The earlier programs, including a 1985 one conducted in Elmira, emphasized the health and safety benefits of belt use. Warning periods were included before any tickets were issued for not buckling up. Since then, acceptance of belt use laws — and enforcement of such laws — has grown.

Elmira's STEP relied on three weeks of no excuses for not buckling up. The emphasis on heightened enforcement and publicity achieved 90 percent belt use. Here's what it took to get there week by week:

WEEK ONE focused on public information, with media reminders of the importance of belts. Motorists were told intensive enforcement would begin the next week. Belt use rates, observed daily, were displayed on special signs at key intersections.

WEEK TWO included intensive enforcement by city, suburban, county, and state agencies. Publicity continued the strong enforcement message. Feedback signs reported climbing use rates.

WEEK THREE intensified the enforcement. A final publicity wave reported results and garnered community support for achieving 90 percent use.

Buckle Up NOW! in Elmira

TIMELINE

Note: "Buckle Up NOW!" in E
The key is to impleme

6/15/99 Hold initial meeting on roles and responsibilities, funding, overall program goals

7/15 Finalize roles and responsibilities, overall schedule, program elements

Contract with public relations firm

8/2 Specify media mix to carry theme

8/10 Develop campaign theme

8/11 Meet with enforcement agencies to discuss enforcement plan and agency roles

8/16 Schedule pre-program presentations to service organizations, editorial boards, and other community groups

8/20 Write copy for news releases, mock tickets, banners, print ads, radio ads, posters, magnetic car door signs, and fact sheets

8/27 Establish relationships with police agencies for overtime services

JUNE JULY AUGUST S

Can 90 percent belt use be achieved elsewhere? Yes. Elmira is a medium-size community, and achieving the same result — 90 percent belt use — in a large city or rural area would require some modification of the program components. Still, it can be done. The key to success would be the same — a direct,

sharply focused enforcement message. And in any STEP a primary safety belt law is important so officers may stop motorists solely for not using belts.

Can 90 percent belt use be achieved in your own community? It can if you follow the five important steps outlined in this publication.

E OF EVENTS 1999

Imira extended for 3 weeks. STEP programs may be somewhat longer. Intensive enforcement and publicity during a specified time period.



9/1 Create schedules specifying media mix and placement of advertisements

9/17 Book all paid time (radio) and space (print), schedule enforcement including overtime coordinated across agencies, and develop plan to attract news coverage

9/24 Pre-program presentations to community groups

9/24 Produce mock tickets, banners, print ads, radio ads, posters, and car door signs

9/30 Conduct baseline belt use observations

10/1 Begin daily belt use observations for feedback signs

10/4 Hold initial news conference, distribute mock tickets, hang banners and posters, begin advertising and publicity, and unveil feedback signs

10/11 Begin enforcement, hold media event to highlight enforcement kickoff, monitor belt use rates and number of tickets issued

10/22 Achieve 90% belt use

10/25 Announce results to media and thank all participants

SEPTEMBER OCTOBER

STEP ONE

Community Ownership, Planning, and Coordination

First define the community where the STEP will be conducted — a town, village, city, county, or region. In making the designation, consider these factors:

- Be sure the program reaches everyone. Balance available resources with the area's size and population.
- Assemble a strong coalition of enforcement and community agencies.
- Publicity must saturate the media, which may require considerable resources in large cities or counties,

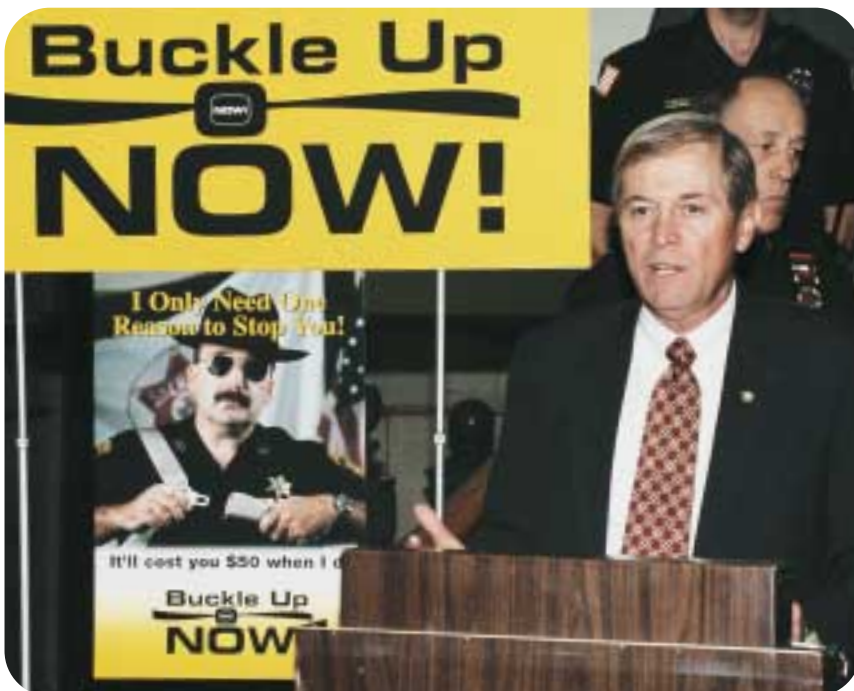


so the size of the target area should correspond to available resources for media placement and distribution.

Because STEPs are brief and intense, planning and coordination are crucial. Develop a timeline for your STEP, from initial planning through program implementation, data collection, and evaluation. Designate people to assume the following responsibilities:

- overall planning/coordination
- enforcement planning/coordination
- publicity planning/coordination
- data collection planning/coordination
- public awareness materials
- spokesperson

Because enforcement is crucial, make sure enforcement officials from all local agencies take the lead and serve as spokespeople. They may also provide overall planning and coordination.



To tailor your STEP's message to local residents and deliver the message effectively, it might make sense to hire a local marketing and communications firm to develop the theme — for example “Buckle Up NOW!” in Elmira — and produce all media and public relations materials. An alternative is to draw on existing resources within local police or highway safety organizations to develop the theme, produce the media materials (advertisements, etc.), and place the ads. If a public information officer or media specialist from a local organization does become involved, the STEP must become this person's top priority. This is necessary to ensure program coordination.

Community support also is essential, so garner the early cooperation of public officials, civic and public organizations, private industry, and educational groups. Useful selling points: the lifesaving and injury-reducing benefits of belts plus related economic savings to the community when crash injuries are avoided. If they're available, use local statistics to make your case — they can be more persuasive than state or national figures.

Keep judicial officials apprised. This is important because putting your STEP into action may result in a dramatic increase in the workload of the courts.

Chemung County Sheriff Charles D.W. Houser planned and coordinated the enforcement component of “Buckle Up NOW!” in Elmira. He also assumed responsibility for the program's overall planning and coordination. Other local enforcement leaders including the chiefs of police in the City of Elmira, Town of Elmira, and villages of Elmira Heights, Horseheads, and Southport participated in planning and implementation. So did state police. Plus each agency conducted safety belt enforcement within its own jurisdiction.

STEP TWO

Publicity with a Direct Enforcement Message

The goal of a STEP is to capture and sustain public interest through sharply focused publicity. Timing is crucial, so think of the first week as a “wake up” call. Begin with a flurry of publicity — display street banners with

the program theme, post feedback signs, distribute flyers, put up posters, affix “We Enforce Seat Belt” signs to police cars, and begin radio and newspaper advertising. Also hold a kickoff news conference involving local government officials and all participating enforcement agencies. Seek a newspaper editorial in support of the effort. In short, make it impossible to ignore the STEP in your community.

Publicity for a Successful STEP

- kickoff news conference plus media event at first checkpoint
- feedback signs placed at major intersections that display running tallies of current belt use rates and the record high use rate
- large newspaper ads that change during the STEP
- radio spots that air when listeners are likely to be driving
- signs on patrol cars proclaiming the program's theme, like Elmira's “We Enforce Seat Belt Law”
- large street banners proclaiming the program's theme
- posters in public buildings and businesses reminding people of the program's theme
- facsimile traffic tickets for placement on vehicles
- fact sheets; editorials; daily radio, TV, and newspaper coverage; presentations at local events; radio and TV interviews; and more to keep everyone aware of the STEP



I Only Need One Reason to Stop You!



It'll cost you \$50 when I do.

All you have to do is **NOT** wear your seat belt.

In Chemung County, we buckle down on drivers who don't buckle up.

When you're stopped, you'll be ticketed. The fine is \$50.

No excuses.

No exceptions.

It's the law.

Buckle Up NOW!

How Many Reasons Do You Need Before It Clicks?



77 percent of the people who died in car crashes in Chemung County last year weren't wearing seat belts.

Are you wearing yours?

Buckle Up NOW!



"Seat belts are the most effective safety device in cars today, saving our lives, maybe even yours or your loved ones. Do your part or we'll have to give you a ticket!"
—Sheriff Charles Hooper

There's More Than One Reason To Buckle Up In New York State



In Chemung County, motor vehicle crashes happen every 14 hours and are a leading cause of injury and death.

In two seconds, you can buckle up and reduce your risk of being killed or seriously injured in one of these crashes by half.

So buckle up. You never know when you'll be in the wrong place... at the wrong time.

Buckle Up NOW!



"664 people in Chemung County didn't plan on being killed or injured in a motor vehicle crash in 2017. But they were. You could be too. Buckle up or we'll have to give you a ticket!"
—Sheriff Charles Hooper

For each phase of the STEP in your community, develop a publicity plan that addresses the following:

- overall theme and media messages
- schedule and mix of paid advertising
- number and types of media events
- plan for producing advertisements
- number and types of flyers, posters, etc.
- plan for distributing flyers, posters, etc.

Media coverage — both paid ads and news reports — must continue throughout the STEP. During the first days of the program, announce the STEP. Tell everybody more tickets for not buckling up are right around the corner, so get in the habit now of using a safety belt.

Then the message to emphasize is that strong enforcement has begun. Schedule a media event on the first day enhanced ticketing begins. To maximize media coverage and convey a united enforcement effort, be sure all enforcement agencies participate in the media event and begin ticketing.

Also display safety belt use rate increases on feedback signs. Focus publicity on intensive enforcement and numbers of tickets being issued.

Toward the end of a STEP, the activities of previous weeks plus ongoing ticketing will generate further media coverage. As the program unfolds, encourage reporters to focus on progress toward your belt use goal, which is displayed on feedback signs and updated daily.

Employ a variety of strategies to get the most out of the publicity associated with your community's STEP:

- Use a strong local message. Messages about the safety and economic benefits of belt use can help marshal initial support and counter resistance to STEPs, so these are important before a program starts and during its first days.

- Remember that the three most important messages as a STEP progresses are enforcement, enforcement, and enforcement. Tell drivers they'll have to choose between buckling up and getting a ticket and a fine. Tell them failure to buckle up is reason enough to be stopped and ticketed.

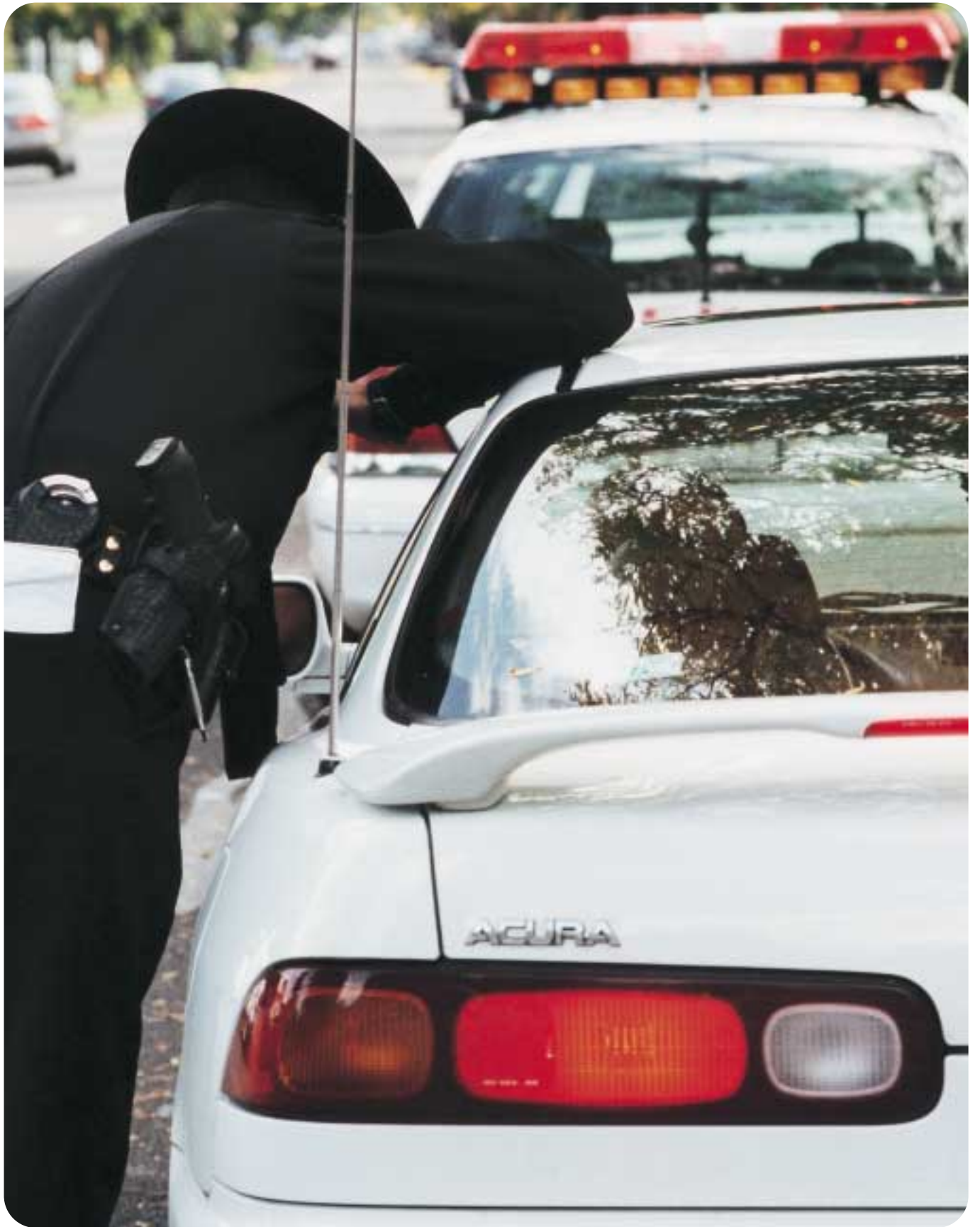
- As the program moves toward its conclusion, bring media messages back to the lifesaving benefits of safety belts. Consider publicizing individual "saved by the belt" stories, in which survivors tell how they were saved in a crash because they buckled up. These can be powerful motivators to get people to use their belts. Plus the stories reinforce the need for the enhanced belt law enforcement.

- To sustain media interest, keep reporters abreast of enforcement results day by day. Give reporters suggestions for news or feature stories — for example, individual stories from survivors or reasons motorists give at checkpoints for not buckling up. Information about the belt law plus crash and injury statistics can be summarized in a fact sheet for the media.

- Rely on enforcement officials as primary spokespeople. They generally are experienced at addressing the media, and because of their roles and responsibilities in the community they can convey both the safety and enforcement messages. People will believe them when they talk about the near certainty of getting a ticket for not buckling up.

Safety belt checkpoints are essential not only to the enforcement effort but also for publicity. They're highly visible and generate media coverage. They reinforce the perception among motorists that a ticket is all but certain if a safety belt isn't buckled.





STEP THREE

No-Excuses Enforcement Is Key to a Successful STEP

The purpose of a STEP is to create the perception among all motorists that they'll get a ticket if they don't buckle up. No warnings will be issued in lieu of tickets. No excuses will be accepted. Creating this perception requires a coordinated enforcement effort.

The number and types of enforcement activities will vary according to a community's size and type (for example, urban or rural), but any enforcement plan should ensure that all motorists encounter some type of enforcement during the program. The goal is not only to increase actual enforcement but also to enhance the public's perception that the enforcement is intensive. A good way to do this is by conducting highly visible safety belt checkpoints. And to reinforce the idea that the enforcement is a coordinated community-wide effort, some of the checkpoints should involve the participation of several agencies — for example, the sheriff's office and local police.

The coordinating enforcement agency should develop a comprehensive enforcement plan and integrate the efforts of all participating agencies. The plan should detail the time, location, and personnel for each special enforcement effort. In developing such a plan, consider these factors:

- Conduct enforcement on both weekdays and weekends at different locations and varying times.
- Avoid checkpoints at night or in bad weather. They usually aren't productive.
- Hold checkpoints at highly visible locations with large traffic volumes and adequate space to pull over unbelted motorists for ticketing. This minimizes the delay among motorists who do buckle up.
- Make sure the first safety belt checkpoint and some subsequent ones involve enforcement personnel from multiple agencies.
- Station a "spotter" a block or two before each checkpoint to identify vehicles with unbelted occupants and radio officers conducting the checkpoint. This way unbelted motorists won't be able to avoid a ticket by buckling up as they approach the checkpoint.



Enforcement Results for Buckle Up **NOW!**

- 32 checkpoints throughout the county during 12 days
- at least 3 checkpoints each weekday
- 823 traffic tickets including 474 belt citations, 10 child restraint citations, 236 tickets for other nonmoving traffic violations, and 103 citations for moving traffic violations
- 1 motorist arrested for DWI and 4 people arrested for crimes unrelated to traffic



Keep traffic moving through checkpoints efficiently to minimize inconvenience among the majority of motorists who do buckle up. Make sure there's adequate space to pull over unbelted motorists for ticketing. Conduct checkpoints on both weekdays and weekends but not at night or in bad weather when they usually aren't productive. Remember that the purpose of checkpoints is not only to ticket people who don't use belts but also to raise STEP visibility, thus encouraging all motorists to use belts.

How to Co

- Conduct a baseline belt use survey a week before the STEP, daily observations throughout the STEP, and then another survey two weeks after it.
- Observe belt use during high-volume daylight hours at high-traffic intersections selected to represent a cross section of the community's traffic.
- Conduct observations at the same time each day.
- Observe only traffic in the lane nearest the observer.
- When the traffic light is red, observe as many stopped vehicles as possible by walking down the line of stopped vehicles.

- Use information from daily belt use surveys to direct enforcement to areas where use rates are lagging.
- Supplement checkpoints with saturation, roving, and/or foot patrols so drivers don't believe they can avoid ticketing simply by avoiding the checkpoints.
- Report all enforcement activities and ticket tallies to the enforcement coordinator every day of the program. Then make sure to convey this information to the media to enhance the perception that enforcement of the belt law is unprecedented.

Ensure adequate personnel for a high level of enforcement by approving overtime for officers or diverting resources from other law enforcement activities. Additional police dispatchers may be needed during the two weeks of special enforcement to process increased requests for the driver's licenses and registration records of motorists being ticketed. Think about these issues in advance so the enforcement effort that's essential to the STEP won't be hampered by unanticipated administrative bottlenecks.

Conduct Safety Belt Observations

- When the light turns green, select the first vehicle passing a pre-determined reference point. Once belt use has been recorded for the first vehicle, select the next vehicle to pass the reference point, then the next, etc.
- Observe shoulder belt use only for drivers and right front passengers in vehicles covered by the belt law.
- Indicate observed use as yes, no, or incorrect (incorrect if the belt is behind the back or under the arm).
- Following a fixed daily schedule, observe 100 vehicles or 30

minutes, whichever comes first, on the north or east side of the street. Then observe south or west traffic, observing 100 vehicles or 30 minutes, whichever comes first, at each intersection selected for conducting the observations.

- Don't conduct belt use observations in bad weather.
- Train observers in the field and provide them with a detailed schedule, a set of procedures, and easy-to-use reporting forms.
- Post results on feedback signs, and update the signs every day.



Buckle Up NOW! Checkpoint Report

Host Agency: _____
 Contact Person: _____ Phone: _____
 Date of Report: _____

Enforcement Information
 Date of Checkpoint: _____ Start Time : _____ End time: _____
 General Location: _____
 Participating Agencies: _____ Number of Officers: _____

Violations	Number of Tickets	Number of Persons Arrested
Seat Belt		
Child Restraint		
Speed		
Other Moving Violations		
Non-Moving Violations		
DWI/DWAI - Related		
Non-Traffic Misdemeanor		
Non-Traffic Felony		

Describe significant incidents including non-traffic arrests.

STEP FOUR

Tracking and Reporting the Progress of Your STEP

Tracking progress is critical to evaluating a STEP. Plus the progress should be reported to the media to heighten public awareness of the program. Track the progress of your STEP three ways:

- Track enforcement efforts: A simple form for each checkpoint or other enforcement activity (see above) shows the location, time of day, enforcement agency conducting the action, number of officers, and number and types of tickets issued. Make special note of any nontraffic criminal arrests. Provide a daily count of these totals to the media, emphasizing the number of safety belt and child restraint citations being issued. Information on the other types of violations, especially criminal arrests, reinforces the message that belt enforcement assists other types of law enforcement and improves overall safety.

- Track safety belt use: A proven way to increase belt use is to post roadside signs providing up-to-date feedback about local belt use rates. Such signs remind

motorists about belt use, imply a constant and vigorous enforcement presence, and motivate the community to continue toward the goal. Feedback signs, displaying both the current use rate and the record, should be posted on the first day of a STEP, when current and record rates will be the same (a baseline rate computed before the program started). As the STEP progresses, the current use rate will go up. To measure the changes, conduct daily surveys at representative intersections with high traffic volumes.

Such daily surveys shouldn't preclude other, more rigorous evaluations. In fact, a STEP may be facilitated by conducting surveys that include more sites and gather information on belt use by the gender, age, and ethnicity of occupants as well as vehicle type.

- Track public perceptions: Gather information about changing public attitudes and perceptions through formal or informal surveys conducted before and toward the conclusion of a STEP. The initial results may be useful in planning the program, and subsequent changes in survey results can help evaluate program success. Questions might address residents' knowledge of the safety belt use law, attitudes toward enforce-





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