



NEWS RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Stephanie R. Paulmeno, MS, RN, C. NHA
Director of Community Health Planning
Tel. [203] 622-7849

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Seat Belt Safety: *Click it or Ticket - A Public Health Concern*

In towns across our country, including right here in Greenwich, our nation's law enforcement officers and others concerned with public safety are engaged in a campaign designed to increase the use of seat belts through stringent enforcement of the State's safety belt laws. This Memorial Day weekend falls in the middle of a designated *Click it or Ticket* campaign, which runs from May 24th through June 6th. This zero tolerance initiative for failure to use seat belts is especially aimed at teens and young adults, as statistics show that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 15 and 34. We have come a long way, yet despite the fact that most people do wear their seat belts according to Buckle Up America, the majority of motor vehicle occupants killed in accidents are unrestrained.

Captain David Ridberg confirmed that the Greenwich Police Department is actively participating in this event and has dedicated an enforcement team to the effort. Technical Officer Ron Bliss, who also serves as the Fatal Accident Investigator, discussed a survey he conducted as part of this campaign. Two hundred random calls were placed to Greenwich residents asking if they used their seat belts when driving. Thirty percent of those questioned do not use them. Disappointingly, Officer Bliss noted this Greenwich survey result has remained fairly consistent over the years. The recent Community Needs Assessment done by Greenwich Hospital's Community Advisory Board confirms this finding. More than a quarter of respondents said they do not always wear their seat belts and 5% do not always put their children in car seats.

According to the 2004 Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), in 2002 forty-seven people in Connecticut between the ages of 16 and 20 died, and eleven suffered incapacitating injuries in motor vehicle accidents. Thirty-seven (64%) of them were not wearing their seat belts. For those between the ages of 18 and 34, the figures were even more dismal. Ninety-eight were killed and twenty-five were seriously injured. Ninety, or 73%, were not wearing their seat belts.

The Greenwich Police Department has already been active making spot checks and issuing warnings. Officer Bliss stated that they would be setting up check sites in undisclosed locations and issuing tickets throughout this Memorial Day holiday weekend. The goal is not to write tickets but to save lives. It is hoped that public awareness about this active enforcement of seat belt use will help save lives.

Stephanie R. Paulmeno
Director of Community Health Planning
Greenwich Department of Health