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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Williams County Safe Communities Launches the Click It or Ticket Campaign

Montpelier, Ohio - Ohio's annual observational seat belt survey, conducted by The Department of Public Safety's Ohio Traffic Safety Office (OTSO) shows the statewide seat belt compliance rate **dropped from 84.1% in 2021 to 80.8% in 2022** - the lowest since 2005.

Williams County Safe Communities Coalition joins with OTSO in urging drivers to buckle up during the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) upcoming national *Click It or Ticket* high-visibility enforcement effort. The seat belt campaign, which coincides with the Memorial Day holiday, **runs from May 22 to June 4, 2023**. Participation includes an educational and media component, combined with high-visibility enforcement.

During the May 22-June 4, 2023 **Click It or Ticket** enforcement mobilization, law enforcement officers nationwide enforce seat belt laws by conducting seat belt checkpoints and zero-tolerance seat belt enforcement activities. Over 900 law enforcement agencies in Ohio are encouraged to conduct seat belt enforcement to ensure the message gets out to drivers and passengers. The goal is to save lives by getting everyone to buckle up. Changing driver behavior is the focus of traffic safety education efforts. It is not enough for drivers to understand the "rules of the road." Drivers must be motivated to change their driving habits. The message is Click It or Ticket. "The Williams County Safe Communities Coalition wants seat belt use to be an automatic habit for drivers and passengers alike. Wearing a seat belt every trip, every time is the simplest thing you can do to limit injury or save your life during a crash," said Peg Buda, Williams County Safe Communities Coordinator from the Williams County Health Department.

In 2022, 1,275 people died in crashes in Ohio, and about 63% of those deaths were directly related to not wearing a seat belt. Research has found that lap/shoulder seat belts, when used, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 % and risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 %.

NHTSA.org Ohio remains below the national seat belt use rate of 91.6%. The updated current county seat belt restraint usage baseline for Williams County is 92.5%, (provided by the University of Akron in 2023).

According to NHTSA, in 2021, there were 11,813 unbuckled passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in the United States. In that same year, 57% of passenger vehicle occupants killed at night (6 p.m.–5:59 a.m.) were not wearing their seat belts. That’s why one focus of the Click It or Ticket campaign is nighttime enforcement. Participating law enforcement agencies will be taking a no-excuses approach to seat belt law enforcement, writing citations day and night.

Neighboring states of Indiana and Michigan, which both have primary seat belt offense laws, had seat belt compliance rates in 2021 of 92.9% and 92.6% respectively.



Williams County Safe Communities Coalition members at their May meeting at the Williams County EMS Building, Bryan, Ohio

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