Ignoring our state seatbelt law costs Montanans over $36 million a year. Sure, we all know not wearing your seatbelt can kill you. But have you ever thought about if you are involved in a crash and didn't die?

Medical costs, emergency medical services, vocational rehabilitation, market productivity, household productivity, insurance administration, workplace costs, legal/court costs all add up to a tremendous economic loss. A loss that is felt not only by you, but all Montana citizens - just from not wearing your seatbelt.

To make matters worse, the economic impact of unbelted motor vehicle occupants is far greater than the estimated health care costs. Many individuals will never return back to their pre-crash levels of productivity. Nationally, $5.20 in productivity is lost for every $1 in health care costs for motor vehicle crash patients. This data suggests an additional $578 million in productivity losses in Montana annually which are preventable through an increase in seatbelt use.*

Montana spends $36.7 million each year on direct health care costs for unbelted patients.

Unbelted occupants are also more likely to require hospitalization following a crash, with an average cost of $52,993.

The average unbelted occupant has a longer hospital stay, requires more intensive care and has hospital charges $16,573 higher than a belted occupant who is hospitalized.

Uninsured and Medicaid-covered unbelted occupants cost the state of Montana over $14 million annually for hospital care of their preventable injuries.

Passage of a primary enforcement seatbelt law would bring additional federal funds for highways and jobs in Montana.

* Provided by Harborview Injury Prevention & Research Center - 2008, Dr. Beth Ebel, Principal Investigator.
The Last Best Place?

Montana is the only state where child restraint laws are secondary. The ONLY state.

In 2003 – 2004, records of 37 children, ages 0-17, who died in a motor vehicle crash as either a driver or passenger were reviewed to determine whether the deaths could have been prevented. 32 (86%) were identified as preventable deaths; of those, 25 did not use a seat belt or child safety seat or used them incorrectly.*

Parents rely on the law to guide them in their choice of child restraint.

What’s more, children model adult behavior. Therefore, adults who don’t buckle up are sending children a deadly message that it is all right not to wear a seatbelt. Research shows that if a driver is unbuckled, 70 percent** of the time children riding in that vehicle won’t be buckled either.

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Room to Live

As illustrated in this picture, even if there is minor damage to the vehicle, unbuckled occupants’ chance of surviving a crash diminishes drastically. Single vehicle, run-off-the-road crashes cause over 60 percent of the fatalities in Montana - most due to ejection from the vehicle.

Vehicles are built with a reinforced safety cage to protect occupants in a crash. Within that cage is your best chance to survive - because there is “room to live” if you stay in the vehicle properly buckled up.

From 2004 through 2006, 613 drivers and passengers were killed on Montana roadways. Of those people killed, 71%^^ were not wearing their seatbelts, meaning over 400 people would have had “room to live” if they had only buckled up.

Montana Seatbelt Coalition

The Montana Seatbelt Coalition promotes the adoption of primary occupant protection laws in Montana. Our membership includes interested businesses, individuals, government agencies, legislators and community coalitions representing all geographic regions of the state.

If you are interested in joining this cause and helping to protect Montanans’ pocket books, visit...

www.seatbeltmontana.com

WE HAVE

Secondary Enforcement Seatbelt Laws that allow law enforcement to cite offenders only after they have been stopped for some other traffic violation.

WE NEED

Primary Enforcement Seatbelt Laws that allow law enforcement to stop and ticket a driver for not wearing a seatbelt, just like any other routine violation.