

# **Gov. Evers: Addresses traffic-safety advocates at the 45th annual Governor's Conference on Highway Safety**

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced that Wisconsin's seat belt use has reached over 90% overall use, a life-saving milestone. The governor addressed over 400 traffic-safety advocates today at the 45th annual Governor's Conference on Highway Safety held at Wilderness Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

"Thanks to the hard work and dedication of law enforcement, traffic safety professionals and motorists across Wisconsin, more people than ever are making the life-saving decision to buckle-up," Gov. Evers said.

This year represents the 10-year anniversary of the state's primary seat belt law. When the law took effect in June 2009, the state's seat belt use rate was 74% and increased to 89% in 2018. Preliminary information from a recent observational survey indicates that a statewide average of 90.2% of motorists is buckling up.

"We've reached an important benchmark, but at the same time realize there is more work to do," said Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary-designee Craig Thompson. "Just 10% of motorists fail to buckle up, but this small group accounts for nearly half of the car and light truck occupants killed in Wisconsin traffic crashes every year."

Wisconsin is finally catching up to other Midwest states where seat belt use rates are already above 90%. Wisconsin's primary seat belt law allows law enforcement to stop and cite motorists solely for not being buckled up. Drivers can also be cited for every unbuckled passenger in their vehicle. Failure to fasten a seat belt is among the most common traffic violations in Wisconsin and resulted in 50,875 traffic convictions last year.

"Unbuckled motorists are much more likely to be ejected, injured or killed in the event of a crash," said Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent Tony Burrell. "To prevent needless tragedies, we continue to urge all motorists to buckle up, every seat, every trip whether they're headed across town or across the country."