

WisDOT: Make a commitment to traffic safety this Buckle Up Phone Down Day

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One text behind the wheel. One trip without a seat belt. That's all it takes to change a life forever.

Two-thirds of people hurt in crashes in Wisconsin this year were not wearing a seat belt. Distracted driving contributed to 31 deaths and almost 3,000 injuries so far in 2022.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is urging everyone to focus on the driving behaviors that save lives.

"Those unnecessary tragedies may have been prevented with two simple steps that take just a second but can make all the difference to survive a crash," WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson said. "Driving should be the most important thing on your mind when behind the wheel. Buckle up and put the phone down. Every trip, every time."

Gov. Tony Evers issued a proclamation declaring October 17, 2022 as Buckle Up Phone Down Day. It's an opportunity to rethink every trip in a vehicle.

The statistics

A 2021 survey found seat belt use rates have dropped two percentage points since 2019. The national rate of drivers who wear a seat belt is 90.4%. In Wisconsin it is 88.1%.

Buckling up is one of the easiest and most important things a driver or passenger

can do to stay safe in a crash. Half of those killed in crashes in Wisconsin were unbelted.

Cell phones are one of the biggest distractions for drivers. Distracted driving crash deaths are climbing; 40 people were killed in 2021, up from 31 in 2020 and 26 in 2019.

There is some good news. Despite an increase in overall traffic deaths across the nation earlier this year, Wisconsin is seeing an improvement in recent months. The number of people killed in crashes has dropped below the five-year average for this time of year.

“We are pleased to see the improvement and hope this trend continues, but there is still a lot of work to do to prevent deaths on Wisconsin’s roads,” Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. “We need everyone to make a commitment to protect our communities, starting with our Buckle Up Phone Down challenge.”

Join the effort

With some simple changes in behavior, Wisconsin drivers can stop deadly trends on the roads:

- Always buckle up. Every trip. Every time. Remind friends and family to do the same.
- Remember: texting while driving is illegal in Wisconsin. If you must use your phone, pull over to a safe location.
- Do not use a phone in [work zones and emergency response areas](#). Handheld phones are banned in those areas.

Everyone is encouraged to help us create safer roads in Wisconsin on Buckle Up Phone Down Day and every day. Individuals, organizations, schools, communities, and businesses can commit to saving lives by taking the pledge at <http://www.wisconsin.gov/BUPD>.

Participants are invited to share a thumbs up/thumbs down photo on social media using the hashtag #BuckleUpPhoneDown, then challenge friends, family, and coworkers to do the same.