

# VOLTS Newsletter

*VALUING OUR LIVES THROUGH SAFETY*

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## Seat Belt Safety

Bret Kent shared the following personal story about the importance of seat belt safety.

"It is the nightmare of every parent with a teenage driver. Small towns being what they are, my phone call came from a neighbor. 'Your daughter has been in an accident. It is serious.' The anxiety I felt during the drive was crushing. My thoughts ran from memories of her as a young child to the times I could have been a better father. Arriving at the accident scene at the same time as the ambulance, the first things I noticed were the smell of burnt rubber and the truck she had been driving resting on the passenger door with the undercarriage facing the road. As I rounded the front end of the truck, I could see local EMTs and neighbors crouching near the bed of the upended truck. I was struck with a sense of overwhelming love as I caught sight of her matted hair and blood streaked face. There she was sitting on the wheel well... alive and whole. She couldn't remember what had happened and she was scared, but she was alive. There were moments of concern as tests and CT



scans were completed, but knowing she was alive made the rest of those worries easier to process.

"As her memory returned, she remembered reaching for a water bottle. A distraction that took her eyes off the road for a split second, right at a bend in the highway. She wandered off the right side of the road and overcorrected. The truck spun around and went off the road, on the left hand side, facing the opposite direction she had been traveling. The tracks left behind seemed to indicate that the truck then rolled 1-1/4 times, coming to rest on the passenger side.

"The scene inside the cab of the truck was unbelievable. There was blood and hair on nearly every surface. Curtains of hair hung down from the broken out windows. Calling a standard seat belt 'a restraint' is kind of a misnomer, especially in a rollover, since the torso is free to flop from side to side. But, consider the facts. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that only 2 percent of all vehicle accidents involve a rollover. However, rollovers account for 35 percent of all passenger vehicle fatalities, with 69 percent of those fatalities not wearing their seatbelts. These statistics do not even address severe and life altering injuries. The favorable outcome of this accident had a lot to do with her being restrained.

"My daughter's accident was the result of a poor decision and inexperience; but because she wore her seatbelt, her biggest concern was how to style what was left of her hair. As parents and as a family, we are grateful that she came out essentially unscathed. I frequently find myself thinking about this experience as I am getting into a vehicle, and yet there are times that I will find myself in a moving vehicle without a seatbelt. It is a selfish act. A roll of the dice that could result in me being a lifelong burden to my wife or rob my children of their father. It only takes a second. There is no excuse."

We want to thank Bret for sharing this story and are glad that his daughter was wearing her seat belt and not seriously injured.

Seat belt safety falls under the definition of PPE on the VOLTS data sheet.

Most people have heard the statistics on how many lives could be saved if everyone wore seat belts

every time they got in a vehicle—even for short trips. Many states now have laws that require the use of safety belts, at least by children and vehicle operators. If you don't wear yours, you're betting your life that you can beat the odds.

One of the safest choices drivers and passengers can make is to buckle up. In 2016 seat belt use in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 14,668 lives. Many Americans understand the lifesaving value of wearing a seat belt. The national use rate is at 90.1 percent, but nearly 27.5 million people still don't buckle up. Understand the potentially fatal consequences of not wearing a seat belt and learn what you can do to make sure you and your family are properly buckled up every time.

The consequences of not wearing, or improperly wearing a seat belt are clear:

1. Buckling up helps keep you safe and secure inside your vehicle, whereas not buckling up can result in being totally ejected from the vehicle in a crash, which is almost always deadly.
2. Airbags are not enough to protect you; in fact, the force of an airbag can seriously injure or even kill you if you're not buckled up.
3. Improperly wearing a seat belt, such as putting the strap below your arm, puts you and your children at risk in a crash.

The benefits of buckling up are equally clear:

1. If you buckle up in the front seat of a passenger car, you can reduce your risk of:
  - Fatal injury by 45 percent
  - Moderate to critical injury by 50 percent
2. If you buckle up in a truck, you can reduce your risk of:
  - Fatal injury by 60 percent
  - Moderate to critical injury by 65 percent
3. Wearing a seat belt will help keep occupants inside the vehicle.
  - Occupants thrown from a vehicle during an accident are four times more likely to be killed than those who remain inside.
4. Wearing a seat belt restrains the strongest parts of the body.
  - The strongest parts of the body are the hips and the shoulders. Seat belts are designed

to contact the body at these parts, providing optimum protection.

5. Seat belts spread out the force of a collision.
  - Using a lap and shoulder belt helps spread the force of the crash over a wide area of the body, putting less stress on any one area.
  - A shoulder strap will keep your head and upper body away from the dashboard, steering wheel, and other interior parts of the vehicle that might cause injury.
6. Seat belts help the body to slow down.
  - An abrupt change in speed is usually what leads to an injury.
  - A quick change in speed is what causes injury. Seat belts help extend the time it takes for you to slow down in a crash.
7. Wearing a seat belts protects your brain and spinal cord.
  - Seat belts are specifically designed to protect these two critical and vulnerable areas of the body.
  - Traumatic brain injuries can range in severity from a minor concussion to a fatality. It is always crucial to seek medical attention for all head injuries since many of them do not produce immediate symptoms.
8. Wearing a seat belt is required by law. If you're safety is not reason enough to wear a seat belt, remember that wearing one is required by law.

Not only should seat belts be worn when driving or riding in automobiles, but also when operating heavy equipment, forklifts, etc.

Any observations requiring a seat belt should automatically be classified as an SIF if the seat belt is not being worn. Buckling up only takes a minute and is easy to do. Take the time to buckle up.

Learning the importance of wearing a seat belt starts with a good role model—and that's you. As a parent or caregiver, you are the number one influence on your child for seat belt safety. Research shows that children whose parents buckle up are much more likely to buckle up themselves.

