

Plenty Of Information Supports This Statement

Vehicle Seat Belts Save Lives, Prevent Serious Injuries

Car accidents are the leading cause of death for children under five. In North Carolina, motor vehicle accidents kill more children than any single disease or other type of accident.

If used, available restraint systems could save 60 to 70 of every 100 unbelted occupants who die in crashes.

—University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center

The use of seat belts saves lives and prevents serious injuries. The statistics to back up this statement are available to everyone who cares. But still, the use of seatbelts "is a never ending problem," said Lt. Col. Carmelito Arkangel, chief of Emergency Medical Services at Womack Army Community Hospital, at Ft. Bragg.

The doctor, who has worked in the Womack emergency room for two years, said, "I believe that only 10 percent of the people involved in motor vehicle accidents wear seatbelts."

As of July 1, a North Carolina child passenger safety law went into effect requiring all children under 2 years of age to be in an approved child passenger safety restraint system.

North Carolina is the eighth state to take mandatory action against the biggest threat to the lives of young children. Fort Bragg also falls under this law.

In North Carolina, violators will be issued warning tickets for the first two years and court costs up to \$10 can be imposed thereafter.

"Fort Bragg does not issue a warning ticket, but if the military police observe children who are restrained, they will stop the motorist, and explain the law to them," said 1st Lt. Amy L. Lithgow, traffic safety officer in charge, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, 16th Military Police Brigade (Airborne).

Fort Bragg Regulations state that the use of seatbelts by the operator and passengers riding in a United States government vehicle is mandatory. The regulation also states that the installation and use of seatbelts by Army personnel driving privately owned vehicles on Fort Bragg will be strictly adhered to.

"Overall, people need to use seatbelts more," stressed Lithgow. "People are under the assumption that seatbelts prevent them from getting out of the vehicle. Many times what happens in the event of an accident is, the driver is knocked unconscious by hitting the windshield. If a person were wearing a seatbelt, this wouldn't have happened," she concluded.

"For some reason, so many people have a bad idea about seatbelts," said Spec 6 David R. Root, assistant non-commissioned officer in charge of Nursing Education and Training at Womack. "I don't know where the rumors start, but the statistics and facts prove just the opposite."

According to a study by the Governor's Highway Safety Program, less than one out of every 200 injury-producing crashes involves fire or submersion in water. "Wearing a seatbelt would give you a better chance of being conscious and getting out of the vehicle," stressed Root. The study also states a person's chance of being killed is 25 times greater if thrown from a car.

"The major injuries to patients not wearing seatbelts in motor vehicle accidents are head and neck trauma, to include spinal injury," said Arkangel. "The next major injuries are to the hip because the victim's knees are pushed into the dashboard."

When asked if there were any specific cases where a person was injured due to wearing seatbelt, Arkangel recalled a patient who wore his seatbelt improperly by wrapping it around his arm. A stretched muscle resulted, but the doctor added, "If he were not wearing a seatbelt, he probably would have died. As a direct result, I really can't recall any case where a seatbelt caused more injury."

Besides the adult who chooses not to wear a seatbelt, many

children are unprotected in automobiles out of no choice of their own. "I think it's criminal to have children and not protect them in a car seat or seatbelt," Root pointed out. "It's a part of defensive driving."

"The high incident of death in pediatric patients are head and chest injuries," said Arkangel. "In those cases a lot of the children die."

"Number one—children should not be in the front seat," he continued. He then gave some examples of injuries children suffer when not protected.

"Relative to the body frame, a child naturally has a bigger head than an adult. If he is in the back seat and thrown free, his head will lead first." He explained that a child's head is much softer than an adult's, and that these types of injuries can even lead to brain damage.

Children being held by an adult in the front seat of a car are victims of more serious injuries than the child in the rear seat. "You not only have the force of the child but the combined effect of the adult driving the child into the dashboard," Arkangel emphasized.

"Michigan did a nice study," the doctor recalled. "It was on the effects of a parent holding a child during an accident. A car travelling faster than 25 miles per hour will cause the adult to let loose his grip on the child during an accident. Worse yet, once the child hits he's followed by the adult, causing more serious injury due to the pounds of pressure." To stress the point Root asked the question, "Can you imagine being the parent of a child who saved your life in such a situation?"

In a similar study done by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, it is noted: In a 20 mile per hour crash, if the adult is not restrained and he is holding a 15 pound child, the child can be crushed by the adult with over a ton of force.

The same study on a restrained adult holding a child noted the child would be thrust forward with a force of over 300 pounds and would strike the dashboard.

"The little kid has no conception of what's going on," said traffic officer Lithgow. "We see many incidents of children who hit the dashboard. There're so many buttons and dials, and even the gearshift that adds to the cause of injuries."

Another interesting part of the highway safety study was the fact that in over 700 collisions, unrestrained children were possible contributing factors if not direct causes of the collisions. Fifty percent of these accidents could have been prevented if the children involved were restrained.

Two examples were given in the study of children being a direct cause of an accident. The first was children falling out of their seats, thus causing the driver to pull the wheel to the right of left while trying to catch the child. The other was the driver diverting his attention to a child who was not sitting down in his seat.

"The average accident I see results in back injuries or fractures of the spine," said James C. Cook, an emergency medical technician who works with the ambulance crew at Womack. "The majority of injuries to the head, back and neck are due to bouncing around inside the car. Ninety percent of the injuries sustained in auto accidents I go to are direct results of not wearing a seatbelt."

When asked if he witnessed an accident where a seatbelt was the cause of an injury or death, Cook stated, "Those are the accidents I'm not called to since the victim walks away unharmed."

Cook then recalled an accident involving a mother and daughter. The child was secured with a child safety seat while the mother did not wear a belt. When he got to the scene of the accident the car was overturned. The mother was injured, but, he described, "The child was hanging upside down,

safely in his seat, without a scratch."

A tip for parents with small children is the Cumberland County Health Department's "Operation Buckle-up," a program that enables parents to lease a child safety seat for \$1.50 per month. Department personnel will also show parents how to install the seat properly.

Root feels there is a definite problem concerning the use of seatbelts. "People aren't concerned," he said. "The don't think about wearing seatbelts until it's too late. Human nature being what it is causes people to have a false sense of security."

"We need to increase awareness at Bragg," he continued. "Hero's guarantee that if people wore seatbelts, it would cost people less money, fewer deaths and fewer losses of personnel in training. It's no use spending the time and money to train people only to have them killed in a traffic accident."

Insurance companies are quite aware of the lack of interest people have concerning the use of seatbelts. "Government studies prove from 80 to 90 percent of drivers do not wear belts," said Bill Russell, public affairs manager of Allstate Insurance Company in Charlotte, N.C.

Some insurance companies offer a 30 percent reduction on medical payment coverage if the owner's car has air bags. "The reason most insurance companies prefer air bags over seatbelts is simply because the public decides not to use belts," said Russell. "But for maximum safety, both belts and air bags should be used." In a serious accident the air bag automatically inflates in a split second, protects, and then deflates. There are rumors, with no basis, that have been going around about air bags inflating during normal driving conditions and causing deaths or injury.

Russell stated 17- to 70-year-old people took part in testing air bags that were artificially inflated without prior warning. "Not one case did it interfere with the ability to maneuver their vehicles," he pointed out. "I have personally been in demonstrations where we inflated the air bag under normal driving conditions and there's nothing to it."

Seatbelts have been around since the 1930s but it wasn't until the mid-60s that they became standard equipment. Studies now indicate air bags offer greater protection than the seatbelt, but, at this point in time, they are standard equipment.

An internal study done by Allstate using figures from the National Safety Council and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association determined that out of 26,750 car fatalities, 10,600 of them could have been prevented had air bags been used.

The going rate for having the full-front-seat air bag system installed is anywhere from \$600 to \$750, and that is only if the dealer is able to do so. Most dealers have stopped installing the bags because there was little demand. A full-front bag protects all people in the front seat compared to seatbelts which are only equipped for two passengers.

In total productions as standard equipment, two automakers, General Motors and Ford, have estimated the air bag system retail cost at a little over \$200 per car. Until it becomes a law for all automobiles to have an air bag system, people who care to have them will have to pay much more.

A second device for consideration is the passive restraint system that was developed by Volkswagen. The shoulder belt is connected to the door. The driver and the right front passenger slip into their seats, and when they close the door the belt automatically takes up the slack and lies diagonally across the person's shoulder. The belt is designed to allow for reasonably free movement during driving. It must also be connected before the car can start.

Area Incidents

Air Conditioner, Tools Taken

The following were reported recently to the Hoke County Sheriff's Department.

A \$100 air conditioner was stolen from a window of the West Hoke School teachers' lounge between Friday and Monday, West Hoke Principal Milton Williams reported.

Personal property was stolen from the storage building at the O'Briant home on N.C. 211 west, Rt. 3, Raeford, W.W. Watkins of Raleigh reported August 12.

Someone broke into the building and stole a \$125 lawn mower, a \$229.45 water pump, 50 feet of garden hose worth \$20, and \$150

worth of tools. The thief also broke into the house but nothing was found missing.

John Russell Law III of Fayetteville, representing Cashwell Auto, reported he was fired at on August 18 when he was leaving a lot on U.S. 401 south following an argument over paper concerning a car. Law had come to pick up. He said the man demanded he show him the paper for the car, and was holding a gun at the time.

The license tags on the car of Verleen L. Brooks at Rt. 1, Red Springs, were lost or stolen about August 21.

Someone broke into the Charles McMillan Store on the U.S. 401 bypass August 20 or 21 and stole 15 cases of beer and 10 to 15 cartons of cigarettes valued at a total of \$210.

Tammy McMillan, Rt. 1, Lumber Bridge, reported her home was broken into August 21 or 22 for the third time but, as in the other two occasions, nothing was stolen.

Ted Lee Lindsey of Rocky Mount reported someone broke into his pickup truck August 10 or 11 while he was staying at the Tanglewood Motel and stole \$750 worth of tools and a rod and reel worth \$35.

Janice Shaw of Vass Road reported someone stole a pistol valued at \$65 from her purse while it was at home. She discovered the theft when she went home August 20 to change purses.

The Raeford Police Department received the following complaints recently.

Someone stole an AM/FM eight-track radio from the car of Gene Harold Jacobs of Rt. 1, Lumber Bridge, while the car was parked August 18 in the House of Raeford parking lot.

Four wire-wheel spoke hub caps valued at \$400 were stolen from the car of Janet McPhaul of Fayetteville August 16 while it was in the House of Raeford parking lot.

New People At Burlington

Robert W. Wright joined the team at the Raeford Plant of Burlington Menswear on August 9 in the Maintenance Area as an engineer trainee.

Wright is a native of Indianapolis, Ind. He received a B.S. degree in electrical engineering at Purdue University in May.

He plays tennis, baseball and basketball, and likes to hunt and fish. He is single and will make his home in Raeford.



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