



City of Colwich Police Department

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Click It or Ticket is on its way

Beginning on Monday, May 22, and continuing through Sunday, June 4, travelers can expect increased police presence on [city streets *or* county roadways] as the Colwich Police Department joins 160 other law enforcement agencies in aggressively enforcing Kansas occupant restraint and other traffic laws as part of the 2017 Kansas ***Click It or Ticket*** campaign. This activity is supported by a grant from the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). Enforcement will occur around the clock. Officers will be especially vigilant at night because seatbelt use diminishes after nightfall, meaning the likelihood of unrestrained crash injuries and deaths soars during those hours.

Drivers can expect strict enforcement of both the Kansas Safety Belt Use Act and the Kansas Child Passenger Safety Act. These statutes require that all vehicle occupants must be appropriately restrained. Law enforcement officers can stop vehicles and issue tickets when they observe front seat occupants, teens in any seat position, or children under the age of 14, riding without being properly restrained. Occupants, ages 14 and over, are cited individually. In the event that a passenger under the age of 14 is observed to be unrestrained the driver will be cited. The fine for an adult seat belt violation is \$10 (no court costs). The fine for a youth (14-17) violation is \$60 (no court costs), while the fine for a child (0-13) restraint violation is \$60 + a court cost charge of as much as \$108. [Enter highest court cost in your jurisdiction.]

Children under the age of four must be correctly secured in an approved child safety seat. Children, ages four through seven, must be securely belted into an approved booster seat unless taller than 4 feet 9 inches or heavier than 80 pounds, in which case, the booster may be removed and the child belted in without it. Children, ages eight through 13 must be safety-belted. In addition, the act prohibits persons under the age of 14 from riding in any part of a vehicle not intended for carrying passengers, such as a pickup bed. For answers to child safety restraint questions and the location of the nearest safety seat fitting station, or safety seat technician, contact the Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office at 1-800-416-2522, or write ktsro@dcca.org.

The aim of ***Click It or Ticket*** is simple: to drastically reduce the number of preventable deaths and injuries that occur when unbelted drivers and passengers are involved in traffic crashes. According to KDOT, 93% of crash occupants who suffer no injuries of any kind are belted in. So, in general, unrestrained occupants who are involved in a crash have, at most, only about a 7% chance of emerging unscathed, not suffering some degree of injury. While seat belts may not always protect from serious or fatal injury, certainly no other piece of equipment within the vehicle provides more protection.

Kansas' overall adult seat belt compliance rate is 87% and ranges, by county, from 61% to 96%, with occupants in rural counties generally less likely to buckle up than those in urban counties. According to KDOT, this rural-urban difference in seat belt rates is especially problematic because rural roadway conditions are, in general, less forgiving than those in urban areas and the consequences of driver misjudgment – such as unsafe speed and failure to buckle up – are likely to be more severe. Picture, for example, two lanes, narrow shoulders, ditches on both sides, and random culverts waiting to snag vehicles leaving the roadway. Or, consider the rollover crash, which is so much more prevalent on rural roadways than city streets. One of the grimmest duties a police officer is called upon to perform is to work a crash where an unrestrained occupant is partially or completely ejected, and then crushed by the rolling vehicle. It is easy to see why fully two-thirds of Kansas' fatality crashes occur on rural roadways even though they see only one-third of all crashes.

Kansans like to see their state as one which protects children, and it does well with its youngest ones, those aged 0-4, who are buckled in to child safety seats at the rate of 97%. However, the percentage of properly restrained 5- to 13-year olds is only 84%. Moreover, seven out of ten times when drivers, themselves, are unbelted, their child passengers are also unsecured.

According to Chief Hinkle, "I want people in the City of Colwich to remember that when they don't buckle up themselves, or require their passengers to buckle up, they are, in effect, promising themselves and those passengers, along with family and friends not present, that no circumstance will arise that will ultimately trigger seat belt activation, whether it be due to distraction, sleepiness, kids fighting in the back seat, etc. either in their vehicle or in all the vehicles they meet on the road. A good example of how things can go from family-ordinary to family-catastrophe in a moment, but with fairly good outcomes, is a crash just west of Hays in August 2016:

Two people were injured in an accident just after 7 a.m. on Saturday in Ellis County. The Kansas Highway Patrol reported a 2012 Chevy Traverse driven by Reginald D. Evans, 24, Colorado Springs, CO, was eastbound on Interstate 70 eleven miles west of Hays when the driver fell asleep. The vehicle drifted left into the median and hit a maintenance crossover that caused the vehicle to go airborne. The vehicle then struck the guardrail and came to rest on the guardrail and against the bridge pillar. Evans and a passenger, Shawwna Evans, 25, Colorado Springs, CO, were transported to Hays Medical Center. Three children in the vehicle were transported to the hospital but not injured. All five were properly restrained at the time of the accident, according to the KHP. (Hays Post, 8/27/16) [Substitute with a local incident where available.]

"I want people to know that, day or night, the Colwich Police Department is committed to aggressively ticketing violators of seat belt and child safety laws, as well as other traffic infractions – such as speeding and texting while driving – which make the need for occupant restraint so necessary. By the way, the \$10 seat belt fine may seem negligible, but the stop is inconvenient and the [officer/deputy] may decide to call in your vehicle and driver's license numbers and check for outstanding warrants and insurance. Use your belt and save yourself the trouble."
