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News Release

Child restraint safety enforcement campaign set to begin today

Officers will enforce seat belts, child safety seats, especially around schools

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (October 27, 2020) — Starting today, the Arkansas City Police Department will join many other law enforcement agencies in aggressively enforcing seat belt usage, especially by children aged 0-13, and other laws as part of a 2020 traffic enforcement campaign.

Beginning today and continuing through Friday, drivers can expect increased police presence on city streets, especially around local schools, to stop what has been likened to an epidemic in Kansas.

“In the health field, they talk about making sure children have received their immunizations to prevent deadly diseases,” said Police Chief Dan Ward. “But what many parents don’t think about is that wearing a seat belt properly is the best way to prevent serious injury or death in a motor vehicle.”

In 2019, eight children aged 0 to 13 years old lost their lives due to car crashes in Kansas. Sadly, 62 percent of those children were not wearing their seat belts.

Children are much more likely to be buckled up if a driver is wearing his or her seat belt, according to the 2019 Kansas observational seat belt survey. If the driver is buckled, about 97 percent of the children are restrained. If the driver is not buckled, only about 30 percent of the observed children were buckled.

“We want adults to model good driving behaviors for children,” Ward said of this enforcement effort.

“Even one child’s death is unacceptable. Please slow down, especially in school zones, eliminate the distractions and always buckle up.”

For more than 20 years, Arkansas City police officers have been educating and warning drivers and passengers about the importance of wearing seat belts while in their vehicles.

Almost half of those killed in crashes each year on Kansas roads are not belted in, according to the Kansas Department of Transportation. At the same time, 98 percent of crash occupants who suffer no injuries of any kind are belted in.

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In general, unrestrained occupants who are involved in a crash have, at most, only about an 8-percent chance of not suffering some sort of injury. Drivers can prevent this simply by taking the few moments necessary to buckle up and ensure that their passengers or children also are secured properly.

“There should be no surprises when it comes to this enforcement effort,” Ward said.

“Officers will issue citations to anyone who does not obey Kansas law.”

Law enforcement officers can stop vehicles and issue tickets when they observe front-seat occupants or children younger than 14 years old who are riding without proper restraint.

Children aged 4 through 7 must be belted securely into an approved booster seat, unless they are taller than 4 feet, 9 inches or heavier than 80 pounds. Children aged 8 through 13 must be safety-belted.

Occupants who are 14 or older are cited individually. The driver will be cited if a passenger younger than 14 is unrestrained. Children younger than 4 must be secured in an approved child safety seat.

In addition, the Child Passenger Safety Act prohibits children younger than 14 from riding in any part of a vehicle not intended for carrying passengers, such as a pickup truck bed.

For questions regarding this traffic safety enforcement effort, call [\(620\) 441-4447](tel:6204414447) or email dward@arkansascityks.gov.

For the latest crash data or to learn more about Kansas safety belt laws, visit www.ktsro.org.

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