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National Safety Belt Use Day, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Studies indicate that 40 to 55 percent of all passenger car occupant fatalities and serious injuries could be eliminated if people would use the safety belts already installed in their vehicles. Each year, 10,000 people could be saved from death if everyone would use safety belts every trip. In 1986, for instance, safety belts saved the lives of 2,200 front seat passengers. Thousands of lives and millions of dollars in medical and insurance expenses have been saved by "buckling up."

The tremendous benefits of adult safety belt and child restraint use are now widely recognized throughout the United States. Twenty-nine States and the District of Columbia have safety belt use laws. These laws, in conjunction with public education, have resulted in a safety belt usage increase among car drivers from 11 percent in 1982 to 42 percent in the first half of 1987.

Although great progress has been made in the recognition of the advantages of increased safety belt use, less than one half of all Americans use their safety belts. Each of us can help increase this number by remembering that the use of safety belts offers protection in a crash and by increasing our willingness to communicate that fact to our loved ones who fail to wear them. We must not wait until personal tragedy strikes to become advocates of safety belt use.

Child passenger protection laws requiring the use of child safety seats and belt systems are in place in all 50 States and the District of Columbia. Correctly used, child safety seats are highly effective, reducing the risk of fatality by about 70 percent and serious injury by about 67 percent. Among children under four, these seats saved about 200 lives in 1986.

Still, the effectiveness of child safety seats can be greatly impaired when they are not installed or used properly. With 100 percent correct use, these seats could save about 500 lives a year. Parents should follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and inspect the seat regularly to make sure it is installed correctly and used on every trip. With added concern for the proper installation and consistent use of these safety devices, we can eliminate needless and preventable tragedies and save hundreds more of our children.

In order to encourage the people of the United States to wear safety belts, to have their children use child safety seats, and to encourage safety and law enforcement agencies and others to promote greater usage of these essential safety devices, the Congress, by H.J. Res. 338, has designated October 15, 1987, as "National Safety Belt Use Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 15, 1987, as National Safety Belt Use Day. I call upon the Governors of the States, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, and the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities and to reaffirm our commitment to encouraging universal seat belt use.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 15 day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan