

Seat belt related deaths at an all time low

While getting road users to be 100 per cent compliant with seat belt laws remains a challenging goal, the OPP sees motorists taking a step in the right direction with 2014 seat belt-related fatalities on track to being the lowest in ten years.

The OPP keeps close watch on its collision and enforcement data as it serves as an important yardstick for assessing how the OPP is doing with its combined traffic enforcement and education initiatives, as well as how motorists are doing with traffic law compliance.

Looking at ten years of collision data (2005-2014), over 100 people died each year from 2005 to 2007 in collisions where lack of seatbelt compliance was a contributing factor and the number has stayed below the one hundred mark since then. When looking at more recent data, a total of 73 people died in collisions due to non-compliance with seatbelt laws last year (2013) - the year that saw the second lowest fatality rate over the past ten years (the lowest number of fatalities was 68 in 2009). This year's seat belt-related fatalities currently sit at 32 (as of September 21, 2014).

With just over three months to go in the year, we are cautiously optimistic and hopeful about reaching a ten-year low in seat-belt related road deaths, but we do not want the public to take away the wrong message from this promising data. Until people reach 100 per cent compliance with seat belt laws, sadly more victims of all ages will succumb to injuries sustained because they were either not wearing a seat belt or were not properly restrained in the vehicle, says OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, Provincial Commander of Traffic Safety and Operational Support.

Over the course of its Fall Seat Belt Campaign, OPP officers will be counting on every driver they encounter during their seat belt checks to ensure that everyone in the vehicle is buckled up. This includes making sure that all children and infants have proper car seats and booster seats and that they are installed correctly. Back seat passengers should never let their guard down about buckling up. In the event of a collision, an unbuckled passenger in the back seat becomes a human projectile within the vehicle, posing an additional risk to occupants in the vehicle - even those who are wearing seat belts.

The OPP would like to thank the many Ontario drivers who continue to take seat belt safety seriously and keep themselves and their passengers safe on Ontario roads.