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Lack of seat belts remains leading cause of preventable road deaths

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The primary safety feature in any automobile ? seat belts ? has been mandatory for 50 years.

Ontario enacted its first seat belt law on Jan. 1, 1976, setting penalties for drivers and passengers who refused to buckle up.

It was one of the first jurisdictions in North America to pass a seat belt law, and since its enactment, the Government of Ontario estimates that over 9,000 lives have been saved in the province.

Despite the success of seat belt enforcement in the decades following the first seat belt law, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) reports that nearly one in four road fatalities involve someone not wearing a seat belt.

?Dealing with dozens of deaths linked to lack of seat belt use every year, the OPP recognizes that what makes these incidents even more tragic for the surviving families is learning that their loved one made the choice to not wear their seat belt before heading out on the road,? the OPP stated.

During the Easter long weekend, OPP officers conducted a province-wide seat belt campaign, with the goal of ensuring all drivers and passengers are buckling up. This includes ensuring all children are properly secured in an appropriate child car seat, booster seat, or seat belt for their weight, height, and age.

In total, 260 charges were laid during Dufferin OPP's Easter long weekend seat belt campaign, with 26 seat belt charges, 116 speeding charges, three distracted driving charges, five stunt driving charges, and five impaired driving charges. There was also 105 charges issues for other miscellaneous offences.

?Too many lives are lost to something entirely preventable. Buckling up takes seconds, but it can mean the difference between making it home or not. Seat belts save lives, it is that simple,? said Ontario Solicitor General Michael Kerzner.

?I want to thank the OPP for their continued leadership in education and enforcement, especially during [the recent] busy long weekend, helping keep families safe on roads and highways across Ontario.?

During a collision, the threat of serious injury or death rises steeply when a person is thrown into a rapidly opening frontal air bag without a seat belt strapping them in place.

The OPP laid 13,560 seat belt charges in 2025. Failure to wear a seat belt carries a fine of $200 to $1,000 and two demerit points, which remain on your driving record for 2 years.

?In 2025, the OPP responded to 41 road fatalities in which lack of seat belt use was either the cause or a contributing factor. At any time, you can become involved in a collision caused by another driver. The single most important thing you can do to protect yourself during a crash is to ensure you and all other vehicle occupants are properly buckled in,? said OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique.

Within Ontario, people involved in collisions are 36 times more likely to die when not wearing a seat belt, according to the provincial Ministry of Transportation.

?Wearing a seat belt takes only a few seconds, but it can save your life and your family's,? said Prabmeet Sarkaria, Ontario Minister of Transportation.

?Help protect Ontario by buckling up and making sure every passenger is properly secured before every trip.?