

## Seat Belt Myths

Think you know the facts about seat belt use? Check your knowledge against these common myths:

**Myth:** I'm not going far or driving fast, so I don't need a seat belt.

**Fact:** Most crash-related deaths happen within 25 miles of home and at speeds under 40 mph.

**Myth:** There aren't many vehicles on rural roads, so my crash risk is lower, and I don't need a seat belt.

**Fact:** In Minnesota, while rural counties make up just half of the population, they accounted for 56% of traffic fatalities in 2022. Nationally, 51% of passenger vehicle occupants killed in rural areas were not wearing seat belts, compared to 48% in urban areas.

**Myth:** My vehicle has airbags, so I don't need a seat belt.

**Fact:** Airbags are designed to work with seat belts. A seat belt alone provides better protection than just an airbag. If you're unbuckled, the force of the airbag can cause serious injury or death.

**Myth:** I don't want to be trapped in a fire or underwater.

**Fact:** Crashes involving fire or water make up only 0.5% of all crashes. Wearing a seat belt increases your chances of remaining conscious, which is crucial if you need to escape from such a situation.

**Myth:** I only buckle up on highways. City streets are safer.

**Fact:** Most fatal crashes occur on everyday trips, within 25 miles of home, and at low speeds.

**Myth:** I don't want to wear a seat belt, but I'll make sure my kids do.

**Fact:** Adults set the example. When parents don't buckle up, child restraint use drops by 40%. Tragically, 39% of children under 14 who die in crashes aren't properly restrained.

**Myth:** I'd rather be thrown clear in a crash.

**Fact:** Being safely "thrown clear" is almost impossible. You're more likely to be ejected through the windshield, dragged along the pavement, or crushed. Staying inside the vehicle, secured by a seat belt, is far safer.

**Myth:** I'm young, healthy, and took driver's ed. I don't need a seat belt.

**Fact:** Young men are at the highest risk. In fatal crashes in 2017, 60% of male passengers aged 18-34 who were killed weren't wearing seat belts.

**Myth:** I'm a good driver—crashes won't happen to me.

**Fact:** No matter how skilled you are, you can't control other drivers. Defensive driving can't always protect you from impaired or reckless drivers. Buckle up, every trip, every time.

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**Myth:** I drive a pickup truck, so I don't need a seat belt.

**Fact:** Trucks and SUVs are more likely to roll over in a crash. In 2022, 61% of pickup occupants who were killed weren't wearing seat belts. Seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60% in pickups and SUVs. No matter the vehicle, seat belts save lives.

**Myth:** A seat belt can hurt you in a crash.

**Fact:** Everything in your car can cause injury in a crash, but a seat belt keeps you from being ejected. While minor bruising can occur, a seat belt drastically reduces the risk of severe injury.

**Myth:** I don't need a seat belt in the back seat.

**Fact:** Back seat passengers are just as vulnerable. In Minnesota, it's the law that everyone must be buckled, no matter where they sit. Nationally, 59% of back-seat passengers killed in crashes in 2022 weren't wearing seat belts, compared to 48% in the front seat.

Remember: Minnesota law requires every passenger in every vehicle to be properly restrained.

Sources:

National Highway Transportation Safety Administration  
Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety

