



For Immediate Release
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Thanksgiving Buckle Up Campaign

Harrisonburg, Va. - Millions of travelers will hit the roads this Thanksgiving, traveling to family and friends' homes for that long-awaited turkey dinner. To keep drivers and their passengers safe, the Harrisonburg Police Department (HPD) is partnering with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to share an important lifesaving reminder: *Buckle Up—Every Trip. Every Time.*

"We hope Thanksgiving only brings happy memories for our community members, but sadly, we suffer vehicle crash-related losses each year, and many are a result of drivers and passengers refusing to buckle up," said Corporal Wayne Westfall, the Traffic Supervisor at HPD. "Nearly half of all drivers and passengers killed in crashes on Thanksgiving weekend in 2016 were not wearing seat belts at the time of their fatal crash. This statistic is just unacceptable when we know that seat belt use is one of the simplest ways to stay safe while riding in a vehicle."

NHTSA estimates that proper seat belt use reduces the risk of fatal injury to front seat passengers by 45 percent, and the risk of moderate to serious injury by 50 percent. In 2016, approximately 14,668 people survived crashes because they were buckled up. If everyone had worn their seat belts that year, an additional 2,456 lives could have been saved. NHTSA's research also reveals that males are more likely to be unbuckled than females in a fatal crash, and that younger drivers are also at greater risk of being unbuckled. In fact, in 2016, 52 percent of the males killed in crashes were not buckled up at the time of the crash, compared to 40 percent of females. The 13- to 15-year-old and 18- to 34-year-old age groups had the highest percentages (62% and 59%, respectively) of occupants killed who were not wearing their seat belts at the time of the fatal crash.

"We want everyone getting to their Thanksgiving destination safely, so our goal with the *Buckle Up—Every Trip. Every Time.* seat belt awareness campaign is to save lives—period," said Westfall. "Hopefully, this campaign reminds travelers, and all drivers, about the importance of buckling up—every trip, every time. Thanksgiving should be a happy time, not a tragic one."

Whether you're a passenger or the driver, riding long distances or short, please buckle your seat belt. Doing so ensures everyone arrives safely to their Thanksgiving destinations. Remember: *Buckle Up—Every Trip. Every Time.*

For more information about traveling safely this Thanksgiving, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/seat-belts.

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