

Jeff Larason - Comments

Posted by the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** on Mar 28, 2022

Thank you for moving ahead with this research.

I want to express my support that collecting data related to seat belt use in serious injury and fatal crash news reports is critical to better understanding why some vehicle occupants choose to go unbelted. This data is also necessary for state highway safety offices to properly perform their duties and will have a direct benefit on Occupant Protection programs nationally.

As a media professional, I'm fully aware of the impact each bit of information provided in news reports has on the mindset of an audience. The cause of crashes (speed, impairment, distractions...) is ubiquitously reported. The cause of the injury (lack of belt use) is much less commonly reported. The exclusion of seat belt information from news reports makes the dangerous statement that seat belts are unnecessary - that the use, or lack thereof, was unimportant to the resulting injury or fatality.

Highlighting the importance of this data point would spur states to make sure that it is a standard piece of information provided to the media when they make inquiries related to crashes. Suppose this study shows a relationship between the inclusion of belt use in media stories and actual belt use. In that case, it will spur agencies to include the information in crash reports.