



WESTPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Press Release

The Westport Police Department is participating in the *Click it or Ticket* campaign this Thanksgiving. From November 20th through November 27th, Westport officers will be taking part in this high-visibility campaign targeting seat belt violators.

Thanksgiving is one of the busiest travel days of the year. Each year, millions of Americans take to the roads to travel to loved ones' homes to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. This increased traffic means an increased likelihood of traffic crashes. Tragically, many vehicle passengers will travel the roads without ever buckling their seat belt, drastically increasing the likelihood of injury or death if they are involved in a crash.

Wearing your seat belt can mean the difference between life and death in a vehicle crash. In fact, proper seat belt use is the single most effective way to save your life in the event of a crash. For this reason, Westport Police Department is teaming up with the United States Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) this Thanksgiving for a special *Click It or Ticket* mobilization to look out for all those who are not buckling up. This high-visibility enforcement campaign is an effective way to spread the life-saving message about the importance of buckling up. For many people, simply seeing law enforcement officers patrolling the roads is an effective reminder to follow traffic safety laws.

The statistics are not on the side of the seat belt violators. Tragically, almost half (48%) of all passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2015 were unbuckled at the time of their fatal crash, and 53 percent of those killed during Thanksgiving weekend were also unbuckled. That means that 301 passenger vehicle occupants were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes nationwide on Thanksgiving weekend—and 301 families mourned their loss. Think nighttime is the safer time to drive because there's less traffic? Wrong. Fifty-seven percent of those killed during Thanksgiving weekend crashes that occurred at night were unbuckled.

NHTSA research also shows that in fatal crashes, males are more likely to be unbuckled than females, and younger drivers and passengers are the most likely to be unbuckled. In 2015, 52 percent of males killed in crashes were not buckled up, compared with 42 percent of females. The 13- to 15-year-old and 18- to 34-year-old age groups had the highest percentages (57% and 58%, respectively) of occupants killed who were not wearing their seat belts at the time of their fatal crash.

Much like fatalities caused by drunk driving, these deaths should be 100-percent preventable. Research shows that with proper seat belt use, the risk of fatal injury to front seat passengers is reduced by 45 percent, and the risk of moderate to serious injury is reduced by 50 percent.

In Connecticut, the law requires seat belt use for operators or passengers in the front seats of a vehicle, passengers in a vehicle operated by a person under age 18, and anyone in a vehicle under the age of 16 unless otherwise secured properly in a child safety seat. Violators face penalties between \$92 and \$120.

According to NHTSA, seat belts saved 13,941 lives nationwide in 2015. If everyone had worn seat belts that year, an additional 2,804 lives could have been saved. That's 2,804 Thanksgivings that could have—and should have—been memorable. Not a living nightmare.

This Thanksgiving, give thanks for the local law enforcement officers that work around the clock to make sure you and your family are driving safe to your Thanksgiving destinations. The Westport Police Department wishes everyone a happy and safe holiday. Ensure your presence at next year's Thanksgiving gatherings by buckling up. Remember: *Click It or Ticket*.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 11.17.17

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