



## **For Immediate Release**

Date: 5/26/2015

Contact: Krista Heinz, Work-N-Wheels Program Specialist

Phone: 608.634.7371

Email: [krista.heinz@couleecap.org](mailto:krista.heinz@couleecap.org)

### **BUCKLE UP WISCONSIN Choose Safety, Not Excuses**

Couleecap promotes safe driving habits for its employees, clients, and the general public. Employees are encouraged to obey all traffic laws and wear seat belts during business and personal travel. Couleecap's Work-N-Wheels program also assists clients to understand safety requirements by having them sign an agreement stating that all occupants in the Work-N-Wheels vehicle will wear seat belts and children will be properly restrained at all times.

The Work-N-Wheels program provides automobile loans and repair assistance to low-income households who need transportation in order to access employment opportunities. The Work-N-Wheels program is able to assist with the cost of vehicle repairs to keep clients safe in their travels to work. Krista Heinz, Program Specialist, states, "Many people have used the repair program for such safety issues as tires, brakes, bearings, lights, and seat belt repairs. Seat belt use is a smart and safe choice for everyone."

According to a National Highway Transportation Safety Association (NHTSA) study, 85% of people in Wisconsin wear their seat belts consistently. That rate is still lower than Wisconsin's neighboring states. Anyone over age 8 who is at least 80 pounds or 4 feet 9 inches, should be using the standard seat belt restraints in vehicles.

*Common reasons given for not wearing a seat belt all of the time:*

**The seat belt doesn't fit or is uncomfortable** - For less than \$35, a seatbelt extender, made specifically for your car, could be purchased. A Couleecap Work-N-Wheels applicant even received one free from a local dealership, so check around!

**Air bags are the new seat belts** - Your body, being unrestrained, could become a projectile and hurt or kill others during an accident. Airbags are meant to complement the seat belt restraint system, not replace it. An occupant in a non-airbag vehicle, wearing a seat belt, is more likely to survive than someone in an air-bag equipped vehicle who is not wearing a seat belt. In 2013, 65% of men ages 18-34 killed in a vehicle accident, were not wearing a seat belt.



**Pregnant women shouldn't wear seat belts because it could hurt the baby** - Obstetricians recommend wearing the shoulder belt across the chest, with the lap belt below the belly and across the hips and pelvis. Don't turn off the airbags. Move the seat back as far as possible. Make sure the driver can still comfortably reach the pedals.

**Seat belts can trap a person in a burning or sinking vehicle** - Less than 1% of all vehicle crashes involve water or fire. A person can't escape anything if unconscious. A window breaker or seat belt cutter can be carried for peace of mind.

**There's no need to buckle up on short trips** - Most fatal crashes occur at speeds below 40 MPH and within 25 miles of the victims' homes.

**Law enforcement are too busy catching real criminals to enforce the seat belt law** - May 24-June 6, 2015 is National Click It or Ticket time. Wisconsin, and the states surrounding Wisconsin, have primary seat belt laws. This means that law enforcement can pull any vehicle over for a seat belt violation and issue a ticket. Research has shown that states with this type of seat belt law have an 11% higher seat belt use rate than states without. Wisconsin seat belt fines are currently \$10 for occupants over age 8, \$10-\$25 for children ages 4-8, and \$30-\$75 for children under age 4.

With law enforcement enforcing seatbelt compliance, there's a good chance of getting caught. Even receiving one \$10 seatbelt ticket per week for a year could cost \$520. Most people could find a more useful way to use that money. Buckle up Wisconsin to save lives and your household budget.

#end#

