



Oakland Police Department

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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OAKLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT CRACKS DOWN ON SEAT BELT VIOLATORS

Aim Is To Surround People With A Strong Safety Belt Enforcement Message Wherever They Turn

(Oakland, California) The California seat belt use rate increased 92 percent, as a result of stepped-up enforcement around the May 2003 seat belt crackdown, but that still leaves 8% of Californians, driving unbuckled and breaking the law.

The Oakland Police Department Traffic Section will join more than 13,000 law enforcement agencies in the *Operation ABC Mobilization*, which runs from November 17 – 30. Oakland's operation will be unique in that the areas targeted have been identified as some City's most violent crime-prone neighborhoods.

"Failure to wear a seat belt is against the law in this state. We enforce this law because it's the best-proven way to save lives. If you won't buckle up to save your life, then buckle up to save yourself a ticket," says Lt. David Kozicki.

The message to teens and young adults will be seen and heard in Internet chat rooms, over public address systems in high school and on college campuses, in athletic stadiums, and through enforcement in locations where young people congregate – such as high schools and shopping malls.

Lt. Kozicki also says that "the only proven way to get significant increases in belt use among young people and ultimately save lives is through high visibility enforcement. Teens and young adults are killed at far higher rates in crashes because they are caught in a lethal intersection of inexperience, risk taking and low safety belt use. These tragedies are predictable and therefore preventable, using proven techniques like high visibility enforcement mobilizations."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 5,341 teens, ages 16-20, died and hundreds of thousands more were injured in traffic crashes in 2001. Fatality rates for teens are twice that of older drivers and the risk of crashes for teens is four times that of older drivers. Two out of five deaths among teens are the result of a traffic crash. In 2000, the estimated economic impact of police-reported crashes involving drivers between 15 and 20 years old was \$32.8 billion.

During the *Operation ABC Mobilization*, officers will intensify enforcement of safety belt laws and child passenger safety laws by setting up saturation patrols. Drivers failing to restrain themselves and their child passengers will be ticketed according to the law.

High visibility enforcement relies on periods of intense enforcement of seat belt laws coupled with media outreach to let people know about the enforcement. For many non-seat belt users, and especially young people, the threat of a ticket has proven to be a greater inducement to buckle up than the threat of injury or death.

The Oakland Police Department participates in the *Mobilizations* because they work. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) reported recently that child fatalities from traffic crashes have declined by 20 percent since 1997, when the *Mobilizations* began. The DOT has credited the *Mobilizations* for significantly contributing to this decline and for dramatically increasing child restraint use.

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