

## **International Seat Belt Pledge**

***"I pledge to wear my seat belt whenever I am riding in a Fire Department vehicle. I further pledge to insure that all my brother and sister firefighters riding with me wear their seat belts. I am making this pledge willingly; to honor Brian Hunton my brother firefighter because wearing seat belts is the right thing to do."***

Currently, Illinois is ranked third in the nation with regards to the number of departments that 100% compliant with regards to the International Seat Belt Pledge. While this is good news, we would be kidding ourselves to think that 100% actually means 100%. What does this mean? We need to reinforce the signature with action. The firefighter must actually buckle up. The company officers must ensure that everyone is buckled up before the vehicle moves (the engineer must want this as well). The chief officers must ensure that the department culture supports everyone doing the right thing. Everyone must have the courage to be safe and hold themselves and each other accountable.

While is more than just seat belts, the seat belt pledge is still an important first step towards creating a culture of safety. With that in mind, here is how to take that all important first step.

- Download the pledge form at <http://www.everyonegoeshome.com/resources/pledge.pdf>.
- Fax completed forms (once all members have signed) to 301-447-1645.
- Email [batla@trainingdivision.com](mailto:batla@trainingdivision.com) and advise that the forms have been faxed and that the department is 100% compliant.
  - Items to include in the email are: Department Name; Town; State; Contact Person, with email address and phone number.
  - For EGH Illinois records, please copy the Task Force, [rwebster@wfrd.org](mailto:rwebster@wfrd.org), on the email.

There has certainly been some pushback related to signing the pledge, with one issue being about seat belt use while providing patient care. Dr. Burt Clark, the originator of the seatbelt pledge, suggests the following:

- Make sure it is legitimately for patient care – is it truly life-saving measures or convenience?
- Is it feasible to stop the ambulance – remember, when you unbuckle, you become a projectile and could be what injures the patient or become injured yourself.
- Are there other solutions – tether systems for providers that can be installed?
- And a reminder – first we do no harm, we have an obligation to ensure scene safety for us and patients; if we are not buckled, we are not safe!

Whatever choice you make, remember that even if you do remove your seat belt for legitimate patient care purposes, you are assuming this extra risk in the interest of saving lives...risking a lot in a calculated manner to save savable lives doesn't just apply to fires.

### **Seat Belt Survey:**

In February 2010, firefighters from across Oklahoma participated in a seat belt study in which they were asked about their use of seat belts while they were on duty.

### **Survey Findings and Results**

The survey drew 588 responses, representing a 24.3 percent response rate, with 96.3 percent successfully completing the survey. A quantitative analysis of seat belt use among Oklahoma firefighters was electronically distributed to 2,419 firefighters in 17 Oklahoma fire departments, which included municipal, rural, career, volunteer, and combination federal/military, tribal, and contract organizations.

Of the respondents, 93.1 percent (524) were male, and 6.9 percent (39) were female. The most common age (mode) was split between 38 and 46. Almost half (49.9 percent) (281) of the respondents reported having 15+ years experience, and 18.3 percent (103) reported having 0 to 5 years. The majority (83.4 percent) (471) were from paid/career departments; 6.4 percent (36) were from federal/military departments.

The positive key findings of the survey were the following: (1) Nearly all fire apparatus in Oklahoma are equipped with seat belts, and (2) During routine driving and emergencies (except fires), the majority of firefighters wear their seat belts.

**The negative key findings were the following: (1) The largest percentage of firefighters reported not wearing their seat belt en route to a fire, and (2) The largest percentage of firefighters reported not having seat belt training within their fire department. Download the entire study [HERE](#) (PDF, 4 MB).**

The following were among the additional findings of the survey:

- 45.5 percent (261) of the firefighters *always* wear their seat belt; 38.7 percent (222) *sometimes* do.
- 60.6 percent (352) feel their peers *sometimes* wear their seat belt; 19.3 percent (112) feel they *rarely* wear them.
- During medical emergencies, 43.5 percent (246) wear their seat belt 100 percent of the time.
- During vehicle emergencies, 38.8 percent (219) wear their seat belt 100 percent of the time.
- During fire emergencies, 40.2 percent (228) wear their seat belt 0 to 25 percent of the time.
- During routine driving, 53.0 percent (303) wear their seat belt 100 percent of the time.
- 72.2 percent (419) said the duration of a trip does not impact their seat belt use.
- 55.9 percent (320) reported being in zero accidents while on duty; 41.8 percent (239) reported being involved in one to three accidents while on duty.
- 60.6 percent (341) said seat belt use within their fire department is recommended; 30.0 percent (169) reported that they automatically use their seat belt.
- 40.6 percent (230) are sometimes encouraged by their peers to wear a seat belt.
- 94.0 percent (530) reported all of their fire department vehicles were equipped with seat belts.
- 48.5 percent (271) reported they had not received seat belt training from their fire department.

**Call to Action: SEAT BELTS SAVE LIVES - Get your department 100% compliant with the International Seat Belt Pledge TODAY!**