

Only A Few Seconds

It only takes an average of three seconds to fasten your seatbelt. Three seconds are a very small part of the 86,400 seconds in a day. If buckling up can make a difference between being carried to a hospital or walking away from an accident, then I'll take a few seconds to hear and feel that reassuring "click."

About two years ago, I witnessed a single vehicle accident in which the driver lost control and rolled his vehicle. Both passengers, who were not wearing seatbelts, were ejected from the vehicle during the course of the accident. I arrived at the first victim at almost the same time as a police officer. The officer was so shocked and revolted by what he saw that he had to turn and walk away from the casualty. Think about that. If you are hurt so badly that you shake up a cop, you have achieved a whole new level of hurt. Cops tend to be tough folks.

Those of you who have had medical training should know the first two things you do with any casualty is to establish an airway and stop the bleeding. I could not establish an airway, because at some point during the accident sequence, the victim had suffered major trauma to his lower throat and chest.

I could not stop the bleeding because he was bleeding from

everywhere. I knew he was dying, and so did he. The only first-aid I could really give was to hold his hand and talk to him as he died. When the ambulance arrived, it was more of body recovery than a medical evacuation.

Tough love, people! Do what you have to do to get your soldiers to wear their seatbelts. It will save their lives. Many people think that wearing a seatbelt is not "cool." If that is true, then every racecar driver on the planet is "uncool."

If you establish and enforce seatbelt use as the standard among your soldiers, then you will complement and re-enforce everything that the Army, federal, and state regulations are trying to accomplish, and it won't matter if it is "cool" or not. It is really not that hard: If you are in a vehicle, then you should be wearing a seatbelt. No exceptions.

I would also like to take a moment and talk about sport utility vehicles and pick-up trucks. There are no seatbelts in the cargo areas of these vehicles, so if you have passengers back there and you have an accident, they become human projectiles. I have to be honest here; I have ridden in the back of pick-up trucks before and I have had friends ride in the back of my pick-up. Now I know better.

Think you are a tough guy and can hold yourself in

the vehicle in the event of a crash? Let me throw some simple physics at you. If the truck is going 30 mph and runs into something, you will be subjected to about 15Gs. That is 15 times the force of gravity. This means that if you weigh 180 pounds, your effective weight during the accident will be 2,700 pounds. Tell you what, head down to the gym tonight and see if you can curl 2,700 pounds. Think you can do it? Cargo areas are for cargo, not people.

Privately owned vehicles (POVs) are the number one killer of our soldiers. You are our first line of defense; let's make it stop.

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POV UPDATE

FY02
(through 25 Mar 02)

Class A-C
accidents/soldiers killed

Cars	59/25
Vans	1/0
Trucks	16/11
Motorcycles	11/5
Other*	8/2

*includes tractor trailers, unknown POVs, and bicycles

Total POV Fatalities **43**

FY01 **36** 3 Yr Avg **44**

"Drive to Arrive" Videos Are Here! Military moviegoers can now see the new "Drive to Arrive" POV country music video clips at their local Army and Air Force Exchange Systems (AAFES) theater. You can preview the videos on our web site at <http://army.safety.mil/>.