

# SEAT BELT FACTS

- More than half of the people killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2004 were not wearing safety belts (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration or NHTSA 2005)
- Lap-shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat occupants by 45%-73% and the risk of moderate-to-critical injuries by 44%-78% (NHTSA 2002)
- An estimated 80 percent of American children are immunized against contagious disease, but less than 10 percent are properly restrained when riding in a vehicle (James Madison University)
- Child safety seats reduce the risk of death in passenger cars by 71% for infants and by 54% for toddlers ages 1 to 4 (NHTSA 2005)
- For children ages 4 to 7, booster seats reduce the injury risk by 59% compared to seat belts alone (Durbin 2003)
- Motor vehicle related injuries kill more children and young adults in the age group of 1 to 34 than any other single cause in the United States (CDC 2005)
- Average inpatient costs for traffic crash victims who did not use seat belts were 50% higher than for victims who were belted (National Safety Council or NSC 2001)

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## CARMAKERS MUST REVEAL BLACK BOXES

Everyone is familiar with the “black boxes” of commercial airliners. They keep a record of everything the aircraft does so that, in the event of an accident, investigators can reconstruct what happened in the minutes leading up to the crash. Most people, though, are unfamiliar with the “black boxes” in their own cars.

In 2005, it was estimated that about 64% of passenger cars on the market came equipped from the factory with “Event Data Records” (EDRs) that kept a computer record of various things a driver was doing in the moments just before and after a serious impact. The number today is certainly much higher and the devices are becoming more advanced.

After more than a decade of study, federal safety regulators outlined minimum requirements for EDRs in motor vehicles recently, but stopped short of mandating them. The new rule passed by NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) requires manufacturers to tell people, in the owners’ manual, if their car has one of these EDRs. As it turns out, that information has been in most owners’ manuals for years. It’s just that few people read their owners’ manuals.

The rule, which takes effect in September 2010, also calls for EDRs to be made more durable and that all automakers must collect the same type of data from them.

The EDRs don’t record voices and they only record a few seconds of data about what the car was doing right before and after the crash. Proponents point to the life saving potential of that data which can be used to assess the performance of a car’s safety systems and even to research unusual crash scenarios.

Event Data Recorders for commercial motor vehicles are currently on the market. Critical applications could include:

- 1) School Buses
- 2) Motor Coaches

- 3) Heavy Vehicles
- 4) Flammable and Dangerous Goods Carriers
- 5) Emergency Service Vehicles
- 6) Mining and Construction Equipment

Despite the positive potential, many people still have concerns about their privacy. After all, the car they drive every day could turn snitch.

What cars have Event Data Recorders?

If you’ve purchased a new car in the past two or three years, chances are excellent that it has one. All General Motors passenger vehicles have them, for example. Ford, Toyota and other manufacturers have been including these devices in their cars for years.

How do I know if my car has an Event Data Recorder? Check your owner’s manual. Look in the index for “Event Data Recorder”. Several states already require car manufacturers to disclose the use of EDRs in the manual. Toyota, Ford and GM all disclose the presence of EDR systems in vehicle owners’ manuals and detail exactly what data is recorded and stored by them.

The EDR does not provide any indication of where a car has traveled or its location at the time of the accident.

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# WINTER CHECKLIST

Old Man Winter is right around the corner and now is the time to get your vehicle ready for winter. Make sure you have the following checked by your trusted mechanic to ensure you are prepared for the upcoming winter.

**Battery and Charging System.** Make sure your battery and charging system are in good working condition. A weak battery may not have the amperage required for a cold winter start.

**Belts/Hoses.** Inspect all belts and hoses for signs of cracking or wear. Replace hoses that are not in good condition.

**Oil.** Once due for an oil change, switch oil to a lighter weight, which helps your engine turn over easier in freezing temperatures.

**Anti-Freeze.** The lifespan of anti-freeze is approximately two years. If you didn't have your anti-freeze changed last year now is the time to do it.

**Windshield Wipers/Washer Fluid.** Change your wiper blades to winter blades; these are heavier and can remove the snow and ice from your windshield a lot easier. Keep your washer fluid reservoir filled with fluid that can withstand 10 degrees below zero. Always make sure you have plenty of washer fluid on hand to clean off all the salt, grime and mud that accumulates on your windshield.

**Tires.** Make sure your tires are not bald or badly worn and have adequate traction for the icy, snowy roads. If they are not up to par you will need to get them replaced.

**Spark Plugs.** Have your spark plugs checked and replaced with new ones if needed.



# BIODIESEL: ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE FUEL

Biodiesel is one of the most thoroughly tested alternative fuels on the market. This clean burning fuel is produced from domestic, renewable items such as vegetable oils, animal fats, or recycled restaurant greases. In the United States the majority of biodiesel is made from soybean or canola oils, thus reducing our dependency on imported oils. Biodiesel at 100% (B100) contains no petroleum but can be blended at any level with petroleum diesel to create a biodiesel blend.

Biodiesel is the only alternative fuel to have successfully completed the health effects testing requirements of the Clean Air Act. These tests show it significantly reduces virtually all regulated emission and

does not pose a threat to human health. The use of B100 greatly reduces carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and particulate matter emissions compared to the regular diesel fuel. The carbon dioxide emissions are reduced by more than 75% over petroleum diesel. The major components of acid rain, sulfur oxides and sulfates are also greatly reduced. It is less toxic than table salt and biodegrades as fast as sugars.

Biodiesel can be used in conventional diesel engines without or with very little engine or fuel system component modifications. The one problem with B100 is it doesn't flow quite as well as petroleum diesel in the cold temperatures and requires special additives or fuel heating systems to operate in colder climates.

# AUTO THEFT

Auto theft is the number one property crime in the United States, costing around \$7.6 billion each year. A theft occurs about every 26 seconds with 1.2 million vehicles stolen a year in the US. Keep these auto theft prevention tips in mind so your vehicle doesn't become one of the statistics. (Source: NHTSA)

- Lock your doors, roll up your windows and take the keys
- Do not leave spare keys in your vehicle, as thieves know where to look
- Park vehicle in a garage, if available, otherwise park on a well-lit and well-traveled street
- Turn wheels sharply toward or away from curb and set the brake
- Do not leave items in sight to entice a thief
- Keep vehicle registration, title, proof of insurance, etc in your possession not in the car
- Etch Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) onto major parts making it easier to find a stolen vehicle or it's parts
- Engrave personal ID numbers on expensive accessories such as car stereos so it will be more difficult for the thief to rid get of
- Never leave your car running, even if only gone for a moment
- Install an alarm, anti-theft device and/or a vehicle immobilizer

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## Top Ten Metropolitan Area with Highest Auto Theft Rates (2003)

- 1) Phoenix-Mesa, AZ
- 2) Fresno, CA
- 3) Modesto, CA
- 4) Stockton-Lodi, CA
- 5) Las Vegas, NV
- 6) Miami, FL
- 7) Sacramento, CA
- 8) Oakland, CA
- 9) Seattle-Bellevue-Everett, WA
- 10) Tacoma, WA

## Top Ten Stolen Vehicles (2004)

1. 1999 Acura Integra
2. 2002 BMW M Roadster
3. 1998 Acura Integra
4. 1991 GMC V2500
5. 2002 Audi S4
6. 1996 Acura Integra
7. 1995 Acura Integra
8. 2004 Mercury Marauder
9. 1997 Acura Integra
10. 1992 Mercedes-Benz 600

(Source: NHTSA)

# DRUNK DRIVING

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities increased from 16,694 in 2004 to 16,885 in 2005 -- the first increase since 2002. Of all traffic related deaths, 39% accounted for alcohol being involved. More than 1.4 million people nationwide were arrested in 2004 for driving under the influence, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report. 33% of 21 to 34 year old males made for the highest percentage of drivers involved in alcohol deaths, the second highest percentage was 25%, made up of males from ages 35 to 44.

## Alternatives to Driving:

**Designated Driver.** This person agrees not to drink any alcohol, not the person who has consumed the least.

**Choose an alternative way home.** Use the local mass transit or a taxi to take you home. Or you can walk if you live close enough and have safe streets to travel on.

**Stay where the activity is held.** If you can, spend the night at a friend's house.