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U.S. DOT Announces 2006 Seat Belt and Motorcycle Helmet Use Statistics

More Americans must take steps to protect themselves on America's highways to reduce rising fatality numbers, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters said today while releasing a study announcing slight changes to the seat-belt and helmet-use figures from 2005 to 2006.

Citing new data from the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS), Secretary Peters said that seat belt use in the U.S. now stands at 81 percent, down slightly from the 2005 use rate of 82 percent. She noted that in the West, belt use climbed from 85 percent to 90 percent between 2005 and 2006; and it rose from 82 to 83 percent in the South. However, in the Northeast, belt use fell to 74 percent, down from 78 percent; and in the Midwest it dropped to 77 percent from 79 percent.

"A seat belt can't work if it isn't on," said Secretary Peters. "Whatever it takes, we all need to do a better job making sure everyone chooses to buckle up."

The Secretary noted that the Department is working with states to promote seat belt use, providing more than \$123 million in 2006 incentive grants to states with primary seat belt laws. The DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also coordinates the national *Click It or Ticket* law enforcement campaigns, which mobilize thousands of police agencies across the country to vigorously enforce state belt laws.

The Secretary said the latest new data also shows that 51 percent of motorcyclists in the U.S. now wear helmets, up from 48 percent in 2005. She noted that motorcycle helmet use rose in the West between 2005 and 2006 (from 50 to 72 percent); and in the Northeast (from 42 to 47 percent). However, the use rate fell in the Midwest (from 53 to 50 percent) and in the South (from 49 to 45 percent). (The only helmets counted in the survey were those that comply with DOT standards.)

"All across America, every single day, helmets save lives," said Nicole R. Nason, the NHTSA administrator.

Administrator Nason said NHTSA recently began to offer federal grants to states for programs to reduce the number of motorcyclist crashes. This year, for example, the agency will provide \$6 million in grant funds to states for motorcycle safety training

and motorist awareness programs. She said the agency will also create a public service announcement to promote helmet use and a consumer video for its website on how to choose a safe and well-fitting motorcycle helmet.

Click to view: ["Seat Belt Use in 2006: Overall Results"](#)

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