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Final Report

# Increasing Seat Belt Use Among Part-Time Users: Messages and Strategies

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16. Abstract <p>Data indicate discrepancies between many persons' perceptions of themselves as seat belt users, and their actual behavior. The data also suggest that instead of targeting non-users, a greater increase in the national rate of seat belt use may be achieved by getting part-time users to use belts full-time. The goal of this study was to identify reasons underlying part-time usage, and then delineate strategies for increasing belt use among part-time users.</p> <p>Focus groups were conducted with males and females, ages 16-20 and 25-34, who acknowledged being part-time seat belt users. Two waves of focus groups, with two male and two female groups per wave, were held in Wichita (KS), Sioux Falls (SD), and Akron (OH). The study obtained results concerning mechanical, informational, and motivational influences on attitudes and behavior, and determined strategic intra personal and community approaches for increasing seat belt use by part-time users.</p> <p>Seat belt use by part-time users is related to risk perception and arousal. Cues such as driving in inclement weather, traveling along unfamiliar roads, transporting younger passengers, and observing dangerous behaviors by other drivers stimulate seat belt use. The absence of such cues during routine, day-to-day short distance driving seems to be associated with less consistent belt use. For the younger respondents, salient messages included emotionally-stimulating true-life stories about peers, as well as other concepts that were visually graphic, youthful, offbeat, and irreverent. For the older respondents, attention-getting seat belt messages focused both on the importance of being a good role model for children, and offering the fullest protection to children. Cash or cash-value incentive programs have the potential to increase belt use, as do well-publicized community outreach efforts, employer-sponsored wellness programs, and early childhood education.</p>					
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. GENERAL GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE SEAT BELT USE	4
III. PART-TIME USERS: REASONS FOR USE AND NON-USE	11
IV. SEEKING EFFECTIVE CUES AND REMINDERS TO PROMOTE FULL-TIME SEAT BELT USE	17
V. MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES TO INCREASE SEAT BELT USE	23
VI. MESSAGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES	35
VII. GROUP DIFFERENCES AFFECTING PROGRAMMATIC DECISIONS	64
VIII. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RESISTANCE TO CHANGE	66
IX. DISCUSSION	68
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A. - MODERATOR GUIDE I	A-1
APPENDIX B. - MODERATOR GUIDE II	B-1
APPENDIX C. - RESPONDENT SCREENER	C-1



# INTRODUCTION

## Background

According to survey data, only a very small percentage of the population rarely or never wear a seat belt when driving in a motor vehicle. The Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, a national telephone survey conducted biennially for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), obtained the following self-reported belt use frequencies in 1996:

61% of drivers said they wore seat belts “all the time” while driving, and indicated that it was more than a year since they last didn’t wear a seat belt.

16% said they wore seat belts “all the time,” but also said they hadn’t worn them at some time during the past year.

12% said they wore seat belts “most of the time.”

6% said they wore seat belts “some of the time.”

3% said they “rarely” use seat belts.

3% said they “never” wear seat belts.

It is interesting that 29% of those who said they use their seat belts “most of the time” also said they did not wear them in the past day and another 38% said they did not wear them in the past week. Even among self-professed “all the time” users, 4% admitted they had not worn their seat belt in the past day, and another 5% had not done so during the past week. This suggests discrepancies between many persons’ perceptions of themselves as belt users, and their behavior.

The above data indicate that a greater increase in the national rate of seat belt use may be achieved by getting part-time users to use belts full-time, compared to transforming non-users into users. The data also imply that many instances of non-use are occurring among persons who already believe that seat belts can

reduce injuries. The challenge faced by safety professionals is to influence part-time users so that their behavior becomes more consistent with this belief.

## **Objective**

The objective of this study was to identify reasons underlying part-time seat belt usage, and then delineate strategies for increasing seat belt use among part-time users. The study explored mechanical, informational, and motivational influences on attitudes and behavior, and determined strategic intrapersonal and community approaches for addressing the problem of part-time usage.

The report provides a guide to safety professionals for developing and implementing programs for increasing seat belt use among part-time users. While some of the findings reported may be specific to the respective study sites, most of the study findings and recommendations should generalize to other locations.

## **Targets**

Primary project targets were males and females, ages 16-20 and 25-34, who acknowledge being part-time seat belt users. The project explored the informational and motivational themes that would likely be most effective with these groups, as well as what types of public information and education (PI&E) materials would most effectively reach them.

## **Method**

NHTSA segments the United States into ten regions for the purpose of programmatic outreach. Study sites were chosen in three states, based on cross-regional comparison of self-reported use from the 1994 NHTSA Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey. Region VIII, which includes South Dakota, had the highest percentage of "most of time" users (17%). NHTSA Region V ranked second in the percentage of "most of time" users, and Ohio had the highest percentage of persons in this category among the states in that region (17%). Lastly, because there may be important differences between persons who classify themselves as "most of the time" and "some of the time" seat belt users, Kansas, which was above the norm in the latter category, was chosen as the third state to contribute a site to the project.

Wichita, Kansas; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and Akron, Ohio, were selected as study sites based on data analyses plus discussions with NHTSA staff and other key state and local persons involved in passenger safety initiatives. Males and females, ages 16-20 and 25-34, were targeted at each site.



The Contractor developed preliminary profiles of the target groups from a socio-demographic literature review, discussions with persons having relevant expertise, analyses of 1990 U.S. Census Bureau data and state highway safety reports, and examinations of previous behavior modification initiatives targeting seat belt usage.

The study objectives were used to develop areas of inquiry for the first wave of focus groups. Four focus groups were conducted in research facilities at each site using the Moderator Guide shown in Appendix A. At each site, respondents were segmented by age and gender.

The first wave of twelve focus groups provided information about attitudes and feelings regarding seat belt use, internal and external cues that set the occasion for belt use, preferred message themes and content, preferred media mix, and venues of community support. A second wave of twelve groups (Appendix B) was then conducted to build on findings from the first wave. The recruiting requirements (Appendix C) and group segmentations for the second wave were identical to those in the first wave.

### **Organization of Report**

The report begins with a chapter of general guidelines for developing programs designed to encourage part-time seat belt users to always wear seat belts. This is followed by chapters presenting more detailed information on the key findings from the groups, including:

- Part-Time Users: Reasons for Use and Non-Use
- Seeking Effective Cues and Reminders to Promote Full-Time Seat Belt Use
- Motivational Strategies to Increase Seat Belt Use
- Message Communication Strategies
- Group Differences Affecting Programmatic Decisions
- Psychological Factors Contributing to Resistance to Change

The report concludes with a discussion chapter which describes how the key focus group findings can be used to develop an effective message strategy and community-based program which encourages part-time users to always wear seat belts.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE SEAT BELT USE**

**Part-time seat belt use is a function of risk perception. Messages and communication strategies designed to promote full-time belt use should include cues which stimulate arousal and anxiety. It is important to recognize that different target audiences respond to different cues, so a “one-size fits all” message approach will be ineffective.**

The information provided by respondents suggested that when they perceive increased risk or danger when driving, they will use a seat belt. They added that the risk does not necessarily have to be direct or personal, but could be related to transporting vulnerable people (e.g., children, older adults). At other times, when cues associated with a threat are absent, they often do not remember to wear a seat belt, or may not choose to wear one.

**Messages reminding part-time belt users of the various inattentive, annoying, and dangerous behaviors of “the other driver” could increase motivation to always wear seat belts.**

While the respondents did not react favorably to a “rough edit” radio public service announcement (PSA) concept about “the other driver” that was tested during the second wave of groups, they mentioned numerous things they have observed about “the other driver” that annoy and threaten them daily, including when they are driving short distances. They provided many ideas for multi-media creative concepts that could be developed to emphasize that these behaviors are not only annoying, but also potentially dangerous, and that seat belts can provide increased protection from this everyday threat.

**For young adults and teenage females, seat belt messages with child-related and relationship themes are attention-getting and memorable.**

The information obtained from an earlier focus group study (*Program Strategies for Increasing Safety Belt Usage in Rural Areas, DOT HS 808 505, November, 1996*) with seat belt non-users indicated that messages which featured children reacting to the loss of a loved one were attention-getting and memorable. Child-centered concepts were again tested in the present study, with the message "hook" being that adults who are not responsible enough to protect themselves are not offering the fullest protection to their children.

Reactions to this concept were positive, with many adult respondents noting that being unable to adequately care for your child, or knowing that your child may have to grow up without you, are powerful motivators for seat belt use. Some adult male respondents added that contemplating the idea of another man possibly raising your child, after you die, is aversive and emotionally-threatening, and could be used as a way to motivate males to always buckle up.

Teenage females also seemed to react favorably to this protection theme, with many trying to empathize with how sad it would be for a youngster to lose a parent in a crash. The teenage male respondents, in contrast, did not view this concept as age-appropriate or motivating for them.

**For young adults, seat belt messages which emphasize the importance of being a good role model for children are appealing and believable.**

The respondents consistently agreed that having children correctly restrained in a child seat or seat belt is an important part of protecting children. Some of the older respondents acknowledged that while they do not always wear a seat belt, they are always certain to restrain a child in their vehicle. Others commented that while they will, on occasion, forget to wear a seat belt when driving alone, they never forget to do so when transporting a child.

During the groups, the older respondents, including many of those without children, indicated that messages focused on the theme of being a good role model for children are appealing and consistent with their personal sense of responsibility to others. They added that they could readily see the importance of serving as a good role model for children by always using a seat belt. This would convey and reinforce to children the message that it is important for everyone to always buckle up. Also, they remarked that this would probably result in seat belt use becoming a habit for children, and that this habitual behavior would likely persist into adolescence and adulthood.

**Teenage males and females prefer messages that are daring, offbeat, and politically incorrect.**

Most teens view themselves as part of the MTV generation, and will be unresponsive to advertising images that seem targeted to older people, even those in their mid- to late-twenties. When the issue was raised about certain messages possibly being perceived as offensive by older adults, the younger respondents simply stated that this is a risk that advertisers must take if they want to successfully reach a younger audience. They added that other messages that adults perceive as offensive are frequently shown on popular media outlets.

**For teenage males, visually graphic messages which focus on the violent outcome of crashes are attention-getting and appealing.**

Information from an earlier focus group study (*Program Strategies for Increasing Safety Belt Usage in Rural Areas, DOT HS 808 505, November, 1996*) indicated that young male, seat belt non-users preferred visual (or easy-to-visualize) messages that focused on the immediate, violent aftermath of a crash. The young male respondents in the present study again provided information indicating they will most likely attend to detailed stories involving crash fatalities, particularly if the victim is a similar-age male or female. When asked what, if anything, could be done to convince young males to always buckle up, many respondents commented that gory, true-life crash and injury footage would influence their behavior.

**True-life stories are viewed as a powerful way to convey messages, and home video footage is an excellent tool for personalizing stories about both non-belted crash victims, and people who were saved from serious injury because of wearing a seat belt.**

Home videos capture viewers' attention, are emotionally stimulating, and can serve as powerful motivators for behavior change. Information obtained from the groups indicated it is important to tell compelling stories that feature persons with whom the viewer can identify, realizing that the emotional "hooks" for different sexes and ages will vary. For example, the older respondents, as well as the young female respondents, reacted positively to a home video showing a six year-old girl's birthday. In contrast, the young male respondents were more attentive and responsive while viewing a home video featuring a male high school senior.

**Monetary and other cash-value incentives are very powerful motivators.**

The respondents indicated that any well-publicized program such as a community seat belt raffle or vehicle “spotter” would be attention-getting and potentially effective. A number suggested that a popular radio station could announce the winners of the prize money, and that the winners could also be featured in local newspapers. They added that even a small amount of money would be sufficient, so long as people felt they had a chance of winning.

The younger respondents said they would eagerly volunteer to participate in a seat belt monitoring program that resulted in a cash (e.g., stipend) or product (e.g., gasoline) incentive. They said they would not object to having a tamper-proof seat belt monitoring device being installed in their vehicle, so long as this was done on a consensual, not mandatory, basis. Most added that it would be foolish for a person not to participate in a voluntary, incentive-based program.

**While the respondents viewed incentive programs as motivating, they reacted negatively to motivational strategies based on increasing public awareness of the less tangible, societal costs associated with non-use of seat belts.**

For example, messages emphasizing that everyone pays for those who do not wear seat belts, in the form of higher taxes, health care, and insurance costs, were viewed as not believable and not relevant. The older respondents indicated they have become desensitized to such messages, stressing that they would just “add it to the list” of costs they incur because of the actions of others. Most remarked that they simply do not believe increased belt use would have a significant effect on their individual taxes, health care, and insurance costs. The younger respondents said these themes are not relevant for them, stating that concerns such as taxes, health care, and insurance do not resonate with their age group.

Also, messages promoting seat belt use as a way of helping an employer reduce insurance costs and business overhead had little positive impact, and even elicited resentment from some respondents. Many indicated that they did not consider this statement believable, and added that even if it were, they do not feel their employer has the right to ask them to wear a seat belt when they are away from work.

**Messages from employers, and other potential influencers, designed to encourage seat belt use could be motivating if they were “framed” within the context of a more global concern for peoples’ health and well-being.**

Many respondents indicated that while they would resent their employer asking them to use a seat belt to help reduce insurance costs, they were much more open and agreeable to encouragement of seat belt use as part of an overall employer-sponsored wellness program. They commented that such a program would be interpreted by employees as an indication that their employer cares about their health and well-being, and is not selfishly mandating behavior change. One female respondent remarked that she works at a hospital with an incentive-based wellness program that is very popular with employees.

**Statistical information about seat belt use and crash injuries has little effect on attitude, motivation, or behavior.**

Some of the respondents remarked that they tend to be wary and skeptical of statistical information. Others commented that they have become desensitized to such information. Many respondents also offered that statistics are a boring way to present important information, especially when considering other available multi-media public information and education venues.

**Various reminders (e.g., buzzers, chimes, lights) inside a vehicle are ineffective for prompting people to buckle up. Some respondents commented that interlocks could be more effective, but complained that they also could be both annoying and dangerous.**

Many respondents commented that they have reached a point where they have simply “tuned out” the seat belt reminder. Others indicated they have disconnected the “annoying” reminders.

While some respondents said that various interlocks might have an effect on behavior, others said that they would be concerned about circuitry malfunctions. Some also indicated that in some situations, an interlock could be dangerous. For example, if a female was being pursued by an assailant and was trying to get in her vehicle and leave quickly, she probably would not want to contend with a seat belt/ignition interlock.

**“First responders” and hospital emergency department professionals are believable messengers, have credibility, and will be listened to when talking about the importance of seat belt use. At the same time, their reality-based messages tend to have only a short-lived effect on behavior.**

The respondents remarked that these professionals could share, in graphic ways, the true-life situations they have encountered in which people suffered permanent injuries or death because they failed to wear a seat belt. Such poignant stories are attention-getting, and create sufficient arousal and anxiety to prompt immediate behavior change. Unless the more positive behavior is reinforced, however, it is unlikely that the behavior will be maintained over the long-term. The respondents indicated that for maximum effect, a small group venue should be used. This would allow for personal interaction between the audience and professionals, and would reinforce the saliency of the message.

**Elementary school-aged children should be encouraged early-on to always buckle up, and school would be a good venue to transmit and reinforce this important information.**

The respondents supported the idea of providing seat belt education to young children, noting that it would not only help them develop the habit of always wearing a seat belt, but also stimulate them to remind siblings, parents, and others to always use a seat belt.

**Peer programs for high school-aged youngsters could be effective, but only if the presenters had relevant stories and experiences to share.**

Some respondents commented that they have attended health and safety assemblies in school where “victims” addressed students about the way in which certain experiences adversely impacted their lives. Some of these assemblies have left a lasting impression, although many respondents remarked that small group meetings would likely be more effective. The respondents emphasized that an effective presenter must be able to share relevant stories in an engaging, energetic, and age-appropriate manner.

**A well-publicized, continuous community program to promote seat belt use would bring increased attention to the issue and facilitate increased use.**

Most respondents felt that a highly publicized, community-sponsored program which included frequent multiple media advertising, community education, and incentive programs would help people “buy into” the importance of seat belt use.

**Nationally-recognized personalities would be ineffective spokespersons unless they have a relevant story to share. Local personalities (e.g., Wichita natives such as Barry Sanders or Martina McBride) would attract local attention, as would local “victims” with an important story to share.**

The respondents remarked that nationally-recognized personalities often suffer from media overexposure, and further commented that they have a degree of skepticism regarding the character and integrity of such individuals. If a personality has a meaningful and relevant story to share, however, their believability and sincerity becomes less of an issue. For example, if a personality shares a true-life story about the impact of seat belt use/non-use, the message could be attention-getting and effective. Local personalities who have maintained a close, positive relationship with their respective community can also serve as effective spokespersons, even if the message they share is not personal. Finally, local persons who have an important, true-life story to share would likely capture the attention of the target audience in that area.



# **PART-TIME USERS: REASONS FOR USE AND NON-USE**

## **General Context in which Driving Occurs**

During the first wave of focus groups, the respondents were asked both what they enjoy and dislike about driving. They remarked that they most enjoy the feelings of freedom and independence they experience when they are driving. Many commented that driving can provide an emotional release; that they can get behind the wheel, turn the radio up, and enjoy the pleasure of driving. For some, it can provide stress relief from demands placed upon them; for others, it can offer them an opportunity to express how they are feeling. With respect to the latter, some of the respondents said that their driving will at times mirror how they are feeling. If they are angry or excited, they will drive faster and possibly more aggressively. If they are feeling calm and relaxed, they will often “take it easy” and simply enjoy the pleasant, unencumbered feeling they associate with driving.

When asked what they tend to dislike about driving, they mentioned anything which interferes with their being able to enjoy the experience. They commented that they do not enjoy driving in bad weather, during rush hour/heavy traffic, in construction zones, or in unfamiliar urban areas. They also enjoy driving less when they are responsible for older or younger passengers. They further mentioned that they do not enjoy sharing the road with others who drive in an inattentive, unskilled and/or dangerous manner. For example, they specifically criticized aggressive drivers; older drivers; out-of-town drivers; and drivers who talk on cell phones, read, and put on make-up when they are driving. They also spoke negatively about drivers who tailgate, don't use turn signals, and drive too fast or too slow for road/weather conditions.

While discussing seat belt use, some respondents, particularly the younger males, commented that seat belts at times interfere with their feeling of personal mobility and comfort in their vehicle. Some even indicated that when riding as a passenger, they will use a seat belt if they perceive the driver of the vehicle is inexperienced or unskilled. So for these individuals, seat belt use may not only interfere with their feelings of driving enjoyment, but also with their self-esteem as it relates to their driving ability. For this reason, it is important to carefully frame messages about the importance of seat belt use, so as not to elicit negative thoughts and feelings.

## Reasons Cited for Use and Non-Use

The respondents were asked to discuss the reasons they use and do not use seat belts. The information they provided suggests that when they perceive increased risk of danger, they will use a seat belt. They added that the risk does not necessarily have to be direct or personal, but can also be related to transporting more vulnerable people (e.g., children, older adults). At other times, when cues associated with a threat are absent, they often do not remember to wear a seat belt, or may choose not to wear one.

REASONS FOR USE	REASONS FOR NON-USE
inclement weather	driving short distance
poor road conditions	frequently in-and-out of vehicle
construction zones	driving alone
highway/high speed driving	good weather
transporting parents/grandparents	people they are with
transporting kids in vehicle	mind on things other than driving
unfamiliar area	wearing a suit/dress or nice attire
urban driving	low-speed driving
seeing law enforcement personnel	think they're safe
after drinking	comfort
seeing dangerous driver	in a hurry
seeing elderly driver	riding as a passenger
days/weeks after crash or near-crash	
after witnessing crash	
long drives	
habit	

The respondents indicated that when weather is inclement, road conditions are poor, their driving takes them through road construction zones; and/or they are transporting children or driving with older adult passengers, they will use a seat belt even when traveling a short distance. Also, some will use a seat belt after a crash or near-crash, when driving at high speeds on highways, traveling on unfamiliar roads or in urban areas, or driving while impaired. Finally, they noted they will put on a seat belt if they see a law enforcement officer or witness a crash scene. The respondents remarked that at such times, their mind is more attuned to their driving, and they are more aware of danger and risk factors. While they may not consciously remind themselves to buckle up, these cues seem adequate to stimulate their attention, arouse a degree of anxiety, and set the stage for seat belt use.

In contrast, during their routine day-to-day driving, the respondents indicated they may at times not think about wearing a seat belt, or even may consciously decide not to put it on. They added that at these times, their mind is often on other things and they do not think about the possibility of being involved in a dangerous situation. Some remarked that they also believe that if they are unbuckled and involved in a low-speed crash, they have a reduced risk of being seriously hurt.

The respondents offered some interesting perceptions about the importance of “habit” with respect to seat belt use. Many remarked that even in the absence of risk-related cues stimulating anxiety or arousal, they will use a seat belt because over time, they have developed the habit of wearing one. While they were not necessarily able to specify how this habit developed and was reinforced, they said that one reason they are so adamant about always making certain that children are restrained is that it will help foster and strengthen the habit of always using a seat belt, making it more likely that children will continue to use a seat belt throughout their lives. Some also commented that since becoming a parent, their own seat belt use has become more of a habit because they are more cognizant of making certain that everyone in their vehicle is correctly restrained.

### **Inconsistency Between Information and Risk-Perception**

One would expect that most drivers would use a seat belt at times when the likelihood of their being involved in a crash is highest. During the focus group discussions, however, the respondents provided information indicating that they are aware that more crashes occur where people are least likely to use a seat belt - when driving short distances near home. They readily admitted that most crashes occur close to home, and believed statistics which support this. They added, however, that they do not think about risk when driving close to home. They attributed the higher incidence of crashes to the fact that most driving occurs near home, and that people tend to be less attentive when driving in familiar, local areas.

*It's believable because you travel 99% of the time around your home.” -  
Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

*“They're comfortable with their surroundings, so they drive faster.” -  
Wichita, females 16-20.*

*“There are people pulling out in front of me all the time. I only drive five minutes to work, but every day you can count on it.” - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*“I believe that most crashes occur close to home. You may know your way around, but the other guy might not.” - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Probably because you're most comfortable around home and not paying attention to stuff." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"When I'm in a familiar street I think I get a little reckless. You take corners faster because you know where they're at." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*Your mind-set is different near home. When you're going to the store, you're not thinking about your driving, but when you travel seven or eight hours, you are." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

A second seeming contradiction is that one would expect drivers to wear a seat belt in situations and at times resembling those in which they had been involved in a crash or near-crash. The cues present in such situations would be expected to set the stage for vigilance and anxiety. The majority of respondents acknowledged having been involved in one or more crashes themselves, and in one of the male groups, all of the respondents indicated they had been in a crash. When queried further, almost all of those who had been in crashes were driving a short distance close to home. Still, they indicated that they often do not use a seat belt during this type of driving.

*"My crash was two miles from my house." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Mine occurred in a parking lot near my house." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"Mine [crash] was a block away from my house." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"A truck hit me as I pulled out of my driveway." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

Finally, one would expect that drivers would use a seat belt if they believe that it provides them with greater crash protection. During the groups, the respondents generally agreed that in most crashes, seat belts are more likely to be effective than ineffective for reducing serious injuries. This belief, though, does not predispose them to wearing a seat belt at all times.

When asked how they reconcile the fact that they seem to protect themselves the least where crashes occur most, the respondents offered that despite believable data about crash frequency/location and the usefulness of seat belts, they do not perceive themselves to be at-risk on short drives - they simply jump in their vehicle and drive off. They said that because their routine daily driving takes them along familiar roadways and through familiar surroundings, they never really think much about the fact that they are at-risk. Instead, they are

thinking about getting to their immediate destination. They also are thinking about anything else that might be happening in their lives - family, friends, work, relaxation. Simply stated, their attention is really not on their driving, nor on safety concerns. At these times they are distracted and inattentive, and rely on their familiarity with their everyday surroundings to drive safely to their destination. All of these competing cognitive, affective, and social activities may explain why reminders about crash frequency/location and the usefulness of seat belts tend to be ineffective cues for stimulating seat belt use.

*"People who don't wear their seat belts just don't think about it when they get in the car." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"I think I'm in control and I don't really worry about it. It's probably stupid, but when I go on shorter trips it's more confining for me to get that seat belt on. I worry about it more if I'm in an interstate or other town." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"You let your guard down compared to being somewhere you don't know." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"People don't think they're going to get in an accident. They just think they're going to the store." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"You just don't think it's [a crash] going to happen." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"Sometimes I don't wear my seat belt because I think I know the road; you know, I spend most of my time there." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"The times I don't wear a seat belt, my mind is on where I'm going." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"I just jump in my car to get to the grocery store. My mind is on the ignition and backing up. I don't think about seat belts." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

### **Role of Discriminative Stimuli (Cues)**

During the first wave of focus groups, the respondents were asked to share what things they like and dislike about driving, what situations influence the way in which they drive, what concerns are most prevalent in their day-to-day lives, and what worries or concerns (if any) they have about the risks associated with driving. They were also asked to offer their thoughts and feelings about the usefulness of seat belts, what things prompt them to use a seat belt, and whether there is any routine chain of behavior they follow after entering their

vehicle. These topics of inquiry were designed to obtain information about possible cues, either individual or generalized, that might evoke increased seat belt use among part-time users.

The respondents provided abundant information about the various internal and external cues that affect their driving behavior and seat belt use. While they consistently identified cues that they associate with risk/danger and seat belt use, they commented that other types of everyday cues associated with driving will likely not facilitate increased belt use. They said that cues associated with crashes do not necessarily stimulate an awareness of risk and subsequent seat belt use. For example, the respondents indicated that they rarely think about driving risk when they are not in their vehicle, even when they read, hear, or view a news story about a crash-related fatality.

They also said that when they do use a seat belt, the sequence of events preceding their buckling up varies from one time to another. For example, on one occasion, a driver may fasten the seat belt immediately after sitting down. The next time, the driver may fasten the seat belt after starting the vehicle. Still another time, the driver may not put on the seat belt until after the vehicle is moving. These three scenarios could even occur sequentially during a single short distance drive in which the person is frequently in-and-out of the vehicle (e.g., local errands).

To further complicate the issue of identifying meaningful cues, many respondents said there have been times when they were surprised to discover they were not wearing a seat belt, even though they meant to use it. Some said they realized it only when they came to a quick stop and lunged forward in their seat. Others remarked that while they were driving, some unidentifiable cue alerted them to being unbuckled (e.g., a sudden inner awareness that the seat belt is not on; a sense of feeling "naked").

While many respondents said that they will wear a seat belt because of habit, they were often unable to state when and how they developed the behavior, how their seat belt use was reinforced, and why their actual behavior does not appear to be habitual. The inconsistency of their seat belt use suggests that the cues required to foster and support a belt use habit are rather elusive, except in the aforementioned risky and dangerous driving situations that produce increased anxiety and arousal. It is at these times that drivers will remember to wear a seat belt, even when traveling a short distance.

## **SEEKING EFFECTIVE CUES AND REMINDERS TO PROMOTE FULL-TIME SEAT BELT USE**

It appears that drivers are more likely to use a seat belt at times when they experience increased anxiety related to their driving. They acknowledge there are certain cues which invariably set the occasion for this anxiety. In contrast, in the absence of these discriminative stimuli, drivers experience insignificant arousal to predispose them to using a seat belt.

During the focus groups, the respondents were asked what cues, if any, might be present during routine, day-to-day short distance driving which might stimulate people to always use a seat belt. They mentioned frustration over the inattentive and erratic behaviors of “the other driver” as one set of potentially useful cues. They also spoke about the relative ineffectiveness of reminders within the vehicle, and offered reactions to the idea of various interlocks involving seat belts. Finally, they discussed the sequences of behavior preceding belt use in an effort by this project to determine if it might be possible to in some way “standardize” the behavioral chain.

### **Attitudes and Feelings about the Other Driver**

The respondents often expressed frustration and resentment over the erratic way in which the “other driver” behaves on the road. Many indicated that almost daily, they are confronted with unpredictable and dangerous behaviors by other drivers. They commented that they look for a number of different cues to alert them to the possibility that the other driver might be dangerous. Specifically, they addressed driver inattentiveness, distractibility, aggressiveness, inconsistency, and recklessness as cues. Also, they offered statements about the possible dangers posed by both younger and older drivers.

Many respondents offered that inattentive drivers are a major day-to-day problem, adding that a variety of things such as daydreaming, children in a vehicle, “competing” behaviors (e.g., grooming, reading, using a phone), and unfamiliarity with an area can interfere with other driver’s concentration and behavior.

*"Inattentive drivers who pull out in front of you." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"When people don't pay attention, when they're looking around inside the car." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"People who sit at green lights, not paying attention. It happens all the time." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"When they're not paying attention. Any drivers that are always looking around." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"When I see kids that are bouncing around the car." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"Early in the morning when you're on the way to work and you see females applying make-up. I've seen them almost get into accidents." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*People putting make-up on, or reading books or newspapers or mail while they're driving." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

*"Putting make-up on, or on the cell phone." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"People on cell phones who are totally out of touch with the road." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Out of town drivers who don't know where they're going. They're being hesitant." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

Respondents also commented that the large number of dangerous, aggressive drivers they witness daily are a cause for concern and pose a serious safety risk.

*"Men drivers. They always have to be faster than females." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"People that ride your bumper." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"When they get right behind your tail, especially at night." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"People that are in such a big hurry, whether they're in front of you or not." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"You pay attention to swervers and maniacs." - Wichita, females 16-20.*



*"Reckless drivers that are just crazy, too fast." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"When you see them swerving all over the road." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"Speeders who gotta get around you to make that next exit." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"These drunk guys would go really fast and then slam on their brakes." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

The respondents further remarked that both younger and older drivers can behave in a manner which creates anxiety in other drivers.

*"Older drivers." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Really old people, usually wearing a hat and driving a big car from the 1970's." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Younger drivers - they're inexperienced." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"When there are a lot more kids in the car than there should be." - Akron, males 16-20.*

Finally, the respondents said that drivers who do not maintain appropriate speed, do not signal correctly, and/or drive in an inconsistent manner present danger to other drivers.

*"When people drive really slow and you have to get somewhere. Like, they're doing 25-30 [mph]. It's really annoying." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"When they don't use their blinkers, or when they leave them on." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"When they signal left and turn right." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"People who brake for no reason." - Akron, females 16-20.*

The respondents remarked that it may be possible to increase seat belt use by promoting awareness of the various dangerous actions of "the other driver."

*"You need something subtle that's associated with everyday life. It's not every day that you get in a wreck, but every day we see some dumb guy on a cell phone who is not paying attention. Have a person unbuckle, get out, and have the tagline, 'For all the Drivers You Don't See, and All the Bad Drivers You Don't Know About.'" - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"It should be about someone local; that would work. If you know somebody who was killed by an aggressive driver and wasn't wearing a belt." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"Say something like even though its not that long, you can't control how other people drive." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"You need to show a fatality; a real person who was killed because of another driver." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"Have somebody sitting in a wheelchair who says, 'Before the accident, I used to be able to do this and that. It wasn't even my fault, but now I just sit in a wheelchair.'" - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"Show the effect on family, like have a commercial talking to a person whose family member died because of a reckless driver, and how it affected the family." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Remember the GMC/Chevy ad with somebody trying to get home and logs and rocks and trees are falling in front of the car. You could substitute this with people trying to get home running into stupid slow drivers, stupid cell phone drivers, and the stupid guy cutting in front of me. Show all the things that happen on a simple ride home, then a close up on a person unbuckling his seat belt after he gets home. People will say, 'That's right, I go through that every day and I don't even think about it.'" - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"I think its a good idea to say that we're not telling you you're a bad driver; we're telling you the other guy might be. That counters the idea that I'm a good driver so I don't need my seat belt." - Akron, males 25-34.*

## **Effectiveness of Vehicle Reminders**

During the first wave of focus groups, the respondents were asked to discuss the way in which cues inside their vehicle presently affect their seat belt use, and were also asked to offer suggestions for other types of cues that might bring about increased seat belt use.

Most indicated that brief chimes, buzzers, and voice reminders are largely ineffective because the driver quickly habituates to these stimuli. Some remarked that auditory reminders which remain activated until the person buckles up are more effective, although a number indicated that these reminders are annoying and can be deactivated by either buckling your seat belt behind you or removing the appropriate fuse. A number of respondents suggested that intermittent reminders with variable tones or messages that escalate in amplitude might be more effective than continuous reminders, although some again commented that these reminders could be easily circumvented or disconnected. Some offered unusual, and somewhat unrealistic, ideas for reminders (e.g., a pin coming out of the driver seat, a light on the outside of the vehicle to alert others). A number also commented that the most effective reminder would involve some type of interlock device.

## **Effectiveness of Interlocks**

The respondents were asked to react to the idea of various interlocks designed to encourage seat belt use. For example, a seat belt/ignition interlock would prevent a person from starting a vehicle until the seat belt was buckled. While a small number of respondents initially indicated that this could be effective, after continued discussion most commented that this could not only be annoying, but also dangerous. Several female respondents, for example, commented that if they needed to quickly enter their vehicle in order to escape from an assailant, they would possibly not have time, or even think, to use their seat belt before starting the vehicle.

When asked about the possible usefulness of a seat belt/radio interlock, most respondents said this would certainly seem safer than an interlock involving the ignition or some other vital electro-mechanical component. Some offered that such an interlock likely would increase their seat belt use, although most again said they would find this annoying and would probably attempt to disconnect the interlock.

## **Behavioral Sequence as a Cue**

The respondents were asked to discuss the specific sequence they follow when they enter their vehicle and prepare to travel. There was not only widespread variation reported across the respondents, but individual respondents sometimes changed their own behavior from one time to another. Some respondents indicated that most of the time, the first thing they do after entering their vehicle is put on their seat belt. Others commented that they typically put on their seat belt after they start the vehicle. Some said that most of the time, they reach for and put on their seat belt after the vehicle is already moving. When asked if there was any way in which they could be encouraged to develop a standard routine in which they would put on their belt immediately after entering a vehicle, most were pessimistic, noting that unless they perceive a risk and their mind is solely on the fact that they are about to start driving, they probably will not consistently adopt this behavior.

# MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES TO INCREASE SEAT BELT USE

During the second wave of focus groups, the moderators introduced potential motivational strategies to increase seat belt use. These included:

- Child-Centered Messages
- Incentive Programs
- Societal Costs
- Statistical Information
- Employers as Influencers
- Emergency Medical Professionals as Influencers

Information from the respondents indicated that child-centered messages and direct monetary incentives are the two strongest motivators for increasing seat belt use. Emergency medical professionals, often referred to as “first responders,” can be credible messengers. Respondents indicated, however, that while graphic, reality-based stories from these professionals will likely have an immediate impact on their belt use, such messages do not seem to serve as a long-term motivator for seat belt use. Direct requests from employers, unless framed within the larger context of concern for employees’ overall health and well-being, would have little influence on behavior. Also, information about societal costs due to non-use of seat belts (e.g., higher health care and insurance costs) would not motivate behavior change.

## **Child-Centered Messages**

The results obtained from a previous focus group study (*Program Strategies for Increasing Seat Belt Usage in Rural Areas, DOT/NHTSA, November, 1996*) indicated that both teen and young adult drivers were sensitive to messages which emphasized the way in which their actions may irrevocably affect the lives of others, particularly young children. As an example, respondents from that study reacted favorably to a print concept showing a young child standing beside a grave, with the headline reading, “You’re Not the Only One Affected When You Don’t Wear a Seat Belt.” They also responded in a positive way to a radio PSA in which a young girl talked about missing her older brother, and wished that he had cared enough to buckle-up himself.

The present focus group study further examined the utility of child-centered messages in an effort to find other effective emotional “hooks.” The respondents were asked to offer their thoughts and feelings about the importance of correctly restraining young children in a vehicle; the message that may be conveyed to such children when a teen or adult is unrestrained in a vehicle; and the argument that a parent/caregiver who chooses not to use a seat belt is not offering the fullest protection to a child.

Respondents from all groups strongly agreed that it is extremely important to correctly restrain a child in a vehicle. Many commented that it is their responsibility to ensure that a child riding in their vehicle is restrained, and added that the child is too young to have any choice in the matter. The respondents added that they believe young children who are always restrained will develop the habit of always using a seat belt and will likely be “all the time” belt users when they begin to drive.

*“You don’t care about yourself. You strap your kids in but not you.” - Wichita, females 15-34.*

*“I may not buckle myself in, but if I have a kid in my car, you better believe I’m going to buckle them in.” - Akron, females 25-34.*

*“That’s the only time I buckle up - when I have kids in the car.” - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*“Nothing irritates me more than when you see someone driving through town with a kid on their lap.” - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*“Whenever I take my younger brother, I make him wear a seat belt, even if I don’t, because I don’t want to be responsible and I want him to have full protection. - Akron, males 16-20.*

*“I think it has to do with responsibility. Are you going to try to take care of yourself and your kids?” - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*“If you could do an ad that tells parents that if they make their kids wear them when they’re little, they’ll wear them when they grow up, even when their parents aren’t around, that would be good.” - Akron, females 16-20.*

Most respondents commented that they are more likely to wear a belt when transporting a child than when driving alone. Parents in particular stressed the importance of serving as a good role model for children. Many of the respondents noted that unrestrained teens and adults in vehicles may convey to young children that wearing a seat belt is not too important, or is something that is only for children. Some also remarked that they believe their own seat belt

use may have a favorable long-range impact by increasing the likelihood that their children will always use a seat belt during their teen years and adulthood.

*"Kids learn by example." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*I think the only way you could make it a habit for kids is if the parents start them young and everyone does it every time." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Once they get older, they see their parents not doing it and then they don't do it." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"That word 'role model' changes the whole thing." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

*"I think it is [persuasive] to use it [the idea that you're not being a good role model.]" - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"I think the idea of a role model is powerful. I don't think anything's going to happen to me, so I don't use my seat belt. But, my son is going to start driving soon. And I remember my mom always used to tell me to put on my seat belt, but she never wore her seat belt, so I never wore mine." - Akron, females 25-34.*

The younger respondents, however, less readily identified their responsibility as role models for children, although they too indicated they are more likely to use a seat belt when they have a child passenger. Younger male respondents indicated that they would likely be unresponsive to messages focused on their serving as good role models for passenger safety

*"It's not really a message to us." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"It depends if you have kids." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"The idea of being a good role model might work with older family members, but it's not a part of our lives. Kids look up more to grown-ups." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

While some respondents spontaneously verbalized that a driver who does not use a seat belt is not offering the fullest protection to a child riding in the vehicle, most of the respondents had to be prompted to fully consider the many aspects of this argument. For example, a driver not wearing a seat belt, who is transporting a child who is correctly restrained, may be more seriously injured and unable to come to the aid of that child after a crash. Also, the child may suffer emotional damage from witnessing the adult being seriously injured. An unrestrained adult who suffers debilitating crash-related injuries (e.g., paralysis),

whether or not their child is in the vehicle, may be unable to provide the same quality of previous care for their child.

Many respondents indicated that while they had not previously thought about these possibilities, the argument of being unable to provide the fullest protection for your child does make sense. The younger female respondents, as well as both the male and female older respondents, commented that it may be useful to develop messages which promote the idea that a responsible parent who cares enough to offer the fullest protection for their child will always use a seat belt. The older male respondents also remarked that it might be useful to point out that if you suffer fatal injuries because you did not use a seat belt, it is possible that another man will end up raising your children. They added that this message could be emotionally-threatening to many males, and might result in their always using a seat belt. Many parents pointed out the irony of viewing themselves as self-sacrificing individuals who would do anything to ensure their child's well-being, yet risking this by not caring for themselves enough to always use their seat belt.

*"That would be a very good message, and it would be a new way to say it." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"You can identify with the message." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"I never used to buckle myself up, until I got my daughter. Then I thought, I always buckle my daughter, but what if I get in an accident and something happens to me? Who's going to take care of her?" - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"You have to protect yourself so you can be there for your child." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"If I didn't have my mom, I don't know what I would do." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I think it would make parents think that they're not being good parents." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Parents would think, 'What if something would happen to them?' Then they wouldn't be around [for the kids]." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"I think it's stronger. That if something happens to me, who's going to take care of my kid, is stronger than using the idea of a role model." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*



*"What good are you going to be to your child if you spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair?" - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"Its kind of hypocritical that we love our kids so dearly that we want them to be protected, but on the flip side, if we're dead and gone, we can't do them any good. The message should be, 'Be around for your kids.'" - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"You've gotta present that as being the single most catastrophic event in a child's life. Maybe showing the kids at your funeral will make the adult think about what could happen." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

The younger male respondents were less enthusiastic about targeting them with this type of message.

*"That message is probably more for parents." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"I don't know too many 18 year-olds who will see it as a message for them." - Akron, males 16-20.*

## **Incentive Programs**

The respondents agreed that money is a very powerful motivator, but stressed that direct monetary incentives are much stronger than societal cost arguments. They indicated that a well-publicized incentive program would be attention-getting and potentially effective. For example, they said that one type of program could include a mobile "spotter" who would randomly observe and identify vehicles (e.g., using license plates) in which the driver was wearing a seat belt, and then arrange for that person to receive a cash or cash-value prize. Some suggested that a popular local radio station could announce the winners of the prize money, and that the winners could also be featured in local newspapers. They remarked that while the amount of money would not have to be much, it would be important that participants believed they have a realistic chance of winning.

*"Have a payback program with incentives. Make a game out of it. Have a seat belt patrol where if you've got your seat belt on you get \$20. - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"The more you're aware of something, the more you'll think about it." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"Sometimes you need encouragement to do the things you should be doing anyway." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"Money is more persuasive." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"Local stores or companies or associations could give out little fun gifts, ten bucks to [a local store]." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"Get local sponsors. Give them a coupon for fast food because they have their seat belts on." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"Substantially lower car insurance, gas vouchers." - Wichita, males 25-34*

*"Cheaper gas, lower insurance." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"Pay for new license plates." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

*"You could have coupons for free stuff; stupid stuff that we need." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Free movie passes or money for gas would work." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"If you have a chance of getting a hundred bucks for having your seat belt on, it won't hurt." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"It's something they ought to be doing. I don't think its any different than a radio contest." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

The respondents were queried about their interest in participating in a voluntary, incentive-based program in which a tamper-proof technologic device would be installed in their vehicle, free of charge, to monitor their seat belt use. They would receive some monetary incentive after a specified period of time based on their recorded level of seat belt use. Almost all said they would eagerly volunteer to participate in such a monitoring program that resulted in a cash (e.g., lower insurance rates, tuition stipend) or product (e.g., gasoline) incentive. When asked specifically how much of a cash incentive would be required to motivate them, the respondents indicated that it would not take much.

*"[The voluntary program] would be having freedom of choice, not forcing you to do it." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"Its not big brother watching if you volunteer." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Who wouldn't do it?" - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"You'd have nothing to lose." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"If its cheaper in the long run, I'll do it every time." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Something to help you pay for your books." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I like the idea of volunteering to be in a program. Discount on insurance would be good." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Ten percent off my insurance would be good enough for me." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Make insurance go down, like \$50.00 every six months." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

### **Societal Costs**

The respondents were asked to provide reactions to the idea that everyone pays for those who don't buckle up, in the form of higher taxes, higher health care, and higher insurance costs. Their reactions to this argument fell into four major categories. First, they indicated that they would "just add it to the list" of the various things they must pay for because of others' irresponsible actions. Secondly, they offered that even if they began to routinely use a seat belt, there would always be others who would not, so they would still have to pay for the non-users. Thirdly, they remarked that even if this argument were true, there would likely be little real impact cost-wise on what they would pay for taxes, insurance, and health care. They added that they are suspicious when cost impact statistics are reported, and noted that most numbers are subject to personal interpretation. Finally, the younger respondents said these messages do not seem particularly relevant to them, given that many people their age do not pay their own taxes, insurance, or health care costs.

*"It sounds like someone lying to me. I don't believe it." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"You can say it (everyone pays) about a lot of things, like smoking, drinking, not having a job, being on welfare. If somebody steals from a store it gets passed on to everyone." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"They're still gonna take your taxes." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"People that don't use seat belts won't care." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Even if it's the truth, what can I do? I can't stop the other guy and tell him to put his belt on." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Insurance companies already look at you as age groups. One 23 year old has three accidents and another has none. You still basically pay the same rate." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"People pay to make up for other people's mistakes already." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"I don't think that statistically you can do it. You may be paying, what, \$5.00 a year extra? Who cares?" - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"It's kind of the same way with health care. People that don't have insurance and the people that do have to pay more. I don't think it would make a difference. It's just a fact of life." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"I don't really think it affects us. If something like that came on TV, I'd be like, 'So what?'" - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"It's going to relate more to older people. If I had bills to pay and kids I think it would bother me more." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"As long as it doesn't come out of our pockets, it doesn't make no difference." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"We already get screwed by insurance companies, so who cares?" - Akron, males 16-20.*

## **Statistical Information**

During both waves of focus groups, the respondents were asked to react to message concepts citing statistics relating seat belt use to crash injuries and fatalities. For example, the respondents were told that for every five people killed in crashes who were not wearing seat belts, three would have survived had they been wearing them. Also, the respondents were provided key statistical information from the "Buckle Up America" campaign and asked how this data would influence their behavior.

Most respondents remarked that they not only consider statistical data to be boring, but they also tend to be very skeptical about the accuracy of such information. Some commented that even a simple statistical fact can be interpreted numerous ways. Others remarked that because statistics tend to be so overused, the target audience will simply "tune out" when they hear this type of information. Some also noted that the estimates given for the number of lives that could be saved are not compelling enough to motivate change.

*"You listen to statistics so much that it doesn't really grab your attention." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"I want to know how many out of five are saved because they didn't wear a seat belt." - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"How do they really know that three [of five] would have survived. They can't say that for certain." - Sioux Falls, females 20-34.*

*"One person killed every hour really doesn't sound like a lot." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"9,500 lives seems like a small number out of 125 million people on the road. The first thing I think is that it's low." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"These aren't facts. They're estimates." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"It sounds like the facts they give about all the other illnesses and crime. Don't base a campaign on facts." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

### **Employers as Influencers**

The respondents were asked to react to a hypothetical situation in which their employer told them that non-use of belts raises insurance costs for businesses like their own, and asked employees to always wear a seat belt because it is important to help contain costs.

Many respondents indicated that they do not consider the premise of significantly higher insurance costs to be believable, and added that even if it were, they do not feel their employer has the right to ask them to wear a seat belt when they are away from work. Some remarked that there is already a policy at their place of work stipulating that you must wear a seat belt when using a company vehicle or when driving on company grounds, and they added that they do not find this objectionable.

*"Sure, I have to do it anyway because I drive a company vehicle." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"I'm not sure it's the employer's responsibility, unless you had to drive a lot for your job." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"That would piss me off." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"I'm not gonna tell him so, but it would probably go in one ear and out the other." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"If I'm on their time, they have the right to ask me. But not when I'm on my own time." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"My first reaction would be, 'I'm here to work, stay out of my business.'" - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"That's my own time, I'm not at work." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I'm sick and tired of people telling me what to do. My mom and dad don't tell me what to do and no one else is." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Well, what about me? At least make it sound like you care about me, and then I might do it." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"It's not their business, unless it's during work." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"Your company doesn't control you when you're off the clock." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"I'd resent it. Nobody likes to be told what to do." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"My boss is going to be telling me so many things that I don't need him to tell me to wear a seat belt." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"I'd wear them whenever I was near them [the employer], but not after that." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

When asked further if there is anything their employer could do to motivate them to always buckle up, many respondents said that if their employer instituted an incentive program with cash rewards, they would probably think more about always wearing a seat belt.

*"They could just take you aside and talk to you." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"If I got paid more I'd probably listen, or got an hour lunch break." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"[The employer] could give me more money!" - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"They could have incentives if you go 'x' days without being hurt." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Maybe they could give you a dollar a day if you came to work wearing your seat belt and if you went home with it on." - Akron, females 16-20.*

Some respondents commented that their employer could better encourage seat belt use as part of an overall health and safety initiative, rather than as an isolated behavior. They said that by focusing on seat belt use as a solitary concern, the employer message would sound too much like a direct order. In contrast, by including seat belt use as part of a comprehensive well-being initiative, the employer will more likely communicate the message, "We care about you." One respondent, a hospital employee, remarked that her employer presently offers an incentive program to employees based on their practicing safe behaviors, including seat belt use, and said that this program has been very effective.

*"They should do it as part of an effort to promote safety on and off the clock." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Go out to the workplace and incorporate it into an overall safety program." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"My company has a Wellness Bonus program, where you promise not to smoke, work out three times a week, wear your seat belts. You have to sign a form every year that says that if you get in an accident and weren't wearing seat belts, you don't get the money at the end of the year." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"They should reinforce the idea of the seat belt as part of an overall safety program, just like other things might be; drunk driving, shutting off the electricity before you work on it. Like it was when I was in the military; safety was the whole deal." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

### **Emergency Medical Professionals as Influencers**

While many respondents indicated that medical professionals could serve as important messengers and influencers, they emphasized that the most believable would be "first responders" (e.g., paramedics, EMTs, fire department rescue squad) and trauma professionals in emergency rooms, who have direct experience with victims from the immediate aftermath of a crash. The respondents shared that these credible professionals should graphically describe the true life crash situations they have confronted, and should provide details on how the crash not only affected the victim, but also those close to the victim.

*"They see it all the time; they have first-hand experience." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"A friend of mine is a medical officer with the fire department and he has to see a lot of real tragic accidents because of people not wearing seat belts." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"People relate to paramedics more because they're more like real people."  
- Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"ER people would be good." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"Trauma, anyone who arrives right on the scene." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"The EMT could tell what they saw when they did have their seat belts on and when they have them off." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"My mom is an emergency room nurse and she told me about a family that had been in an accident and none had their seat belts on. The little boy died and the father's leg had to be amputated. That makes you think." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"Gross stuff is what sticks in your mind. The seat's all bloody, and you see the guy's arm hanging out, and the EMS guy says, 'There's another one that wasn't buckled up.'" - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"If you showed a local, real doctor, that would be believable. Like if it said, 'Akron' on the screen." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"It would have to be a local story." - Wichita, males 16-20.*



## MESSAGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

During the first wave of focus groups, the respondents were asked what types of marketing approaches and/or campaigns, if any, were the most effective for grabbing their attention and motivating them to change their behaviors. Many of the respondents remarked that approaches emphasizing “reality” and true-life consequences are best for grabbing their attention. For example, in all of the groups, respondents indicated that the NHTSA drinking-and-driving PSAs featuring home videos of real people who were killed by drunk drivers are extremely powerful and effective. In the Wichita groups, many respondents also mentioned a local multi-media health campaign, “Take It Outside,” in which the adverse effects of smoking on non-smokers are dramatically depicted.

*“Pictures of little kids always get my attention.” - Akron, females 16-20.*

*“The commercials that are a home video where the little kid gets hit by a drunk driver really gets me.” - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*“The drunk driving commercials with the little kids always get me [the home video PSAs].” - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*“The shock is that it’s something that could be avoided [referring to the home video PSAs].” - Wichita, females 25-34.*

During the focus groups the male respondents, particularly the younger ones, offered that graphic depictions of violence are attention-getting, while females said that they prefer real-life stories that focus more on the non-violent, emotional aspects of situations. When asked whether it would be beneficial to use “fear” as a primary motivator, the respondents noted that while they believe the most effective way to motivate people to buckle-up is to confront them with the reality of what might happen if they do not, such reality-based messages do not have to be focused on promoting fear.

Prior to the message communication testing conducted during the second wave of groups, the respondents were asked to offer their ideas for messages that could promote full-time seat belt use. They provided numerous suggestions, most of which relied on graphic depictions of the physical and emotional reality following a crash in which a driver is unrestrained.

*"The visually graphic stuff is more stimulating for your memory." - Sioux Falls, males, 25-34.*

*"I remember a commercial from a while ago where a police officer says that he never unbuckled a dead person." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Seeing somebody at 30 mph hitting a wall and what happens." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Looking at wrecked cars. You can actually see blood there." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"You need to show a fatality; a real person who was killed." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"If you see some people go through windshields. A windshield with a round head mark." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"If most people have been in a wreck, you want to remind them of that situation. Maybe a reminder as simple as 'Remember last time,' with some graphic art." Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Show a picture of a person who didn't wear a seat belt, you know, a before and after picture of the person's face." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"For young guys I could picture it if they had a lady in the car, and tell you that you don't want to mess her face up. - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"For young guys you've got to have girls. Maybe a commercial where your girlfriend dies in a wreck." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"Use athletics. Are you going to risk not playing basketball for the rest of your life?" - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"My motivator is my daughter. I never wore my seat belt until they made it a law, and still sometimes I didn't. After she was born I thought, 'What if something happened to me and she grew up without me?' "- Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"Show all of the consequences of being in an accident. Like maybe you can't work anymore, how are you going to pay your bills?" - Akron, females 25-34.*

*“Show the effect on family, like have a commercial talking to a person whose family member died and how it affected the family.” - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*“You need to relate it to families to show what will happen to them if something happens to you.” - Sioux Falls, females, 25-34.*

During the second wave of groups, a number of concepts for print, radio, and video public service announcements were evaluated by the respondents. The concepts tested during the second wave were developed based on the information provided by the respondents during the first wave focus groups.

### **Print Concepts**

The following print concepts were tested:

#### **Concept #1 - Protecting Children (two treatments)**

This concept was presented in order to assess the value of messages which stress the importance of driver seat belt use as a part of remaining able to care for and protect young children. Both treatments of this concept showed a frontal view of a young child correctly restrained and forward facing in the rear seat of a vehicle. The first treatment included the headline, “If you don’t protect yourself, you’re not protecting me,” while the second headline read, “You are always here for me.” Both treatments included the same text: “You always make sure I’m buckled in my car seat. But sometimes you don’t wear your seat belt. If anything ever happened to you, what would I do? I need you.” Also, both treatments included the tagline, “Please, for me, ... Buckle Up - Everytime.”

#### **Concept #2 - This Job Makes Me Sick**

This concept was designed to evaluate the believability and effectiveness of a compassionate police officer as a proponent for full-time seat belt use. The treatment depicted a frontal close-up of a police officer, wearing a helmet, badge, and sunglasses. The image reflected in the glasses is a crashed vehicle. The headline, “This Job Makes Me Sick,” was followed by the following text: “Seeing people scraped off the road because they didn’t wear their seat belts is enough to turn anyone’s stomach. I try to prevent this by writing tickets to those who don’t buckle up. I wish I didn’t have to write them at all. It would mean that people are buckling up and staying alive. The tagline read, “Buckle Up - Everytime.”

### Concept #3 - What Have You Got to Lose? (two treatments)

This concept was intended to test reaction to the usefulness of emphasizing increased medical and other costs associated with non-use of seat belts. The first treatment for this concept showed a toll booth attendant reaching out toward a car, with the sign above reading "Not Buckled Up - \$5,000 Toll. The second treatment showed a frontal view of a pickup truck, with money flying out of the cab. For this treatment, the headline was, "How much is wearing your seat belt worth to you?" Both treatments included this text, "Medical costs for crash victims are \$5,000 higher for people not wearing seat belts, because of greater injuries. These are costs you hand over in automobile insurance, healthcare premiums, even taxes ... everyday," and the tagline, "Buckle Up - Everytime."

### Concept #4 - Driving is War - Arm Yourself

This concept was designed to evaluate the argument that given the unpredictable actions of "the other driver," seat belts may be the best available weapon. The treatment depicted a seat belt against a camouflage background, with the words, "Driving Is War. Arm Yourself" in the foreground. The tagline read, "Buckle Up - Everytime."

The two treatments of the Protecting Children concept (Figures 1 and 2) tested well with the female groups of both ages and the older male groups. The headline, "If You Don't Protect Yourself, You're Not Protecting Me" was described as believable and powerful, as was the accompanying text and the tagline, "Please, For Me, Buckle Up - Everytime."

*"It looks like the child is safe." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I like the expression on his face." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"It's a maternal thing." - Akron, females 16-20.*

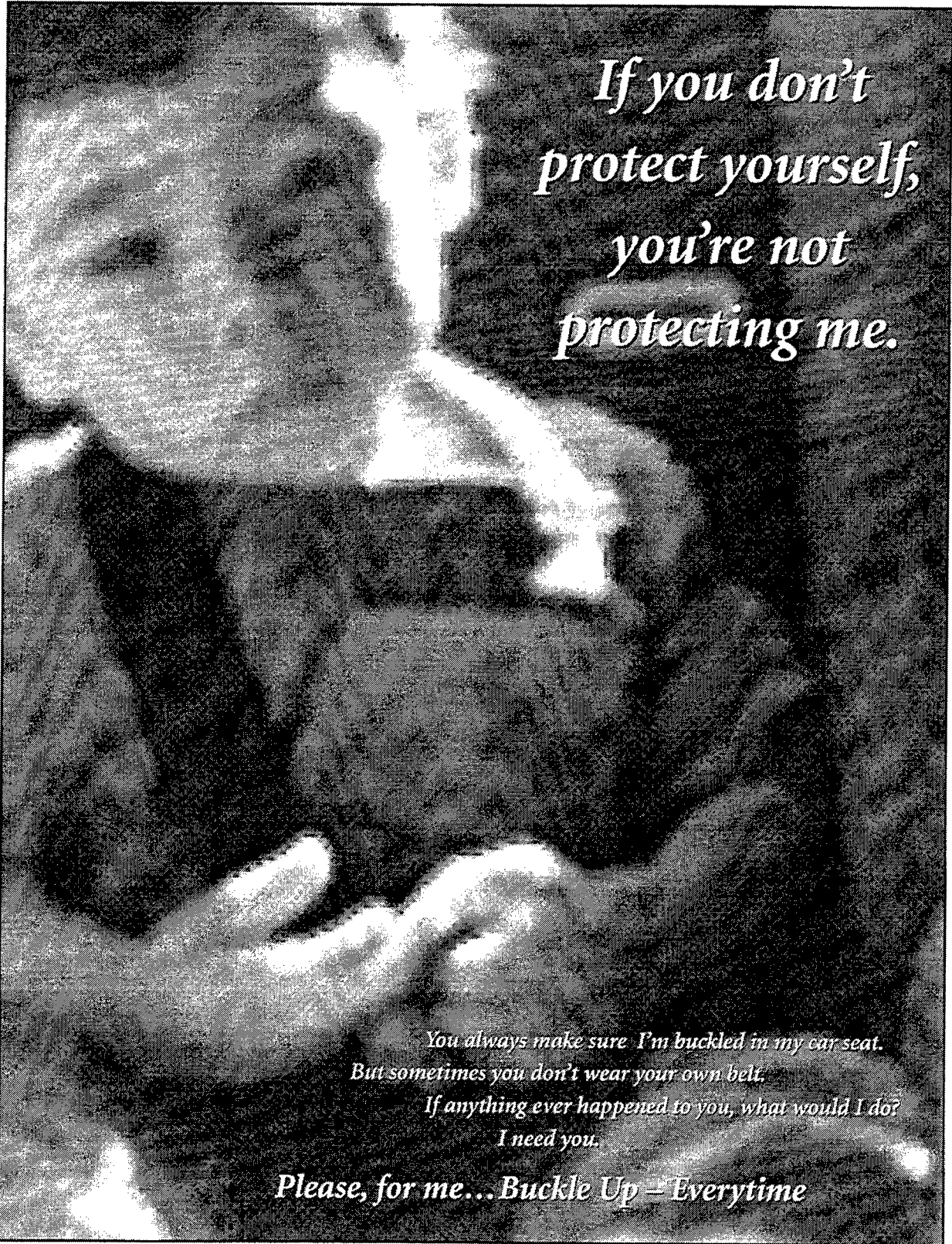
*"It would definitely affect people with kids." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Speaking in the kid's voice is really effective." - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"I got chills. That's great!" - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"It makes you read the rest." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

**FIGURE 1**

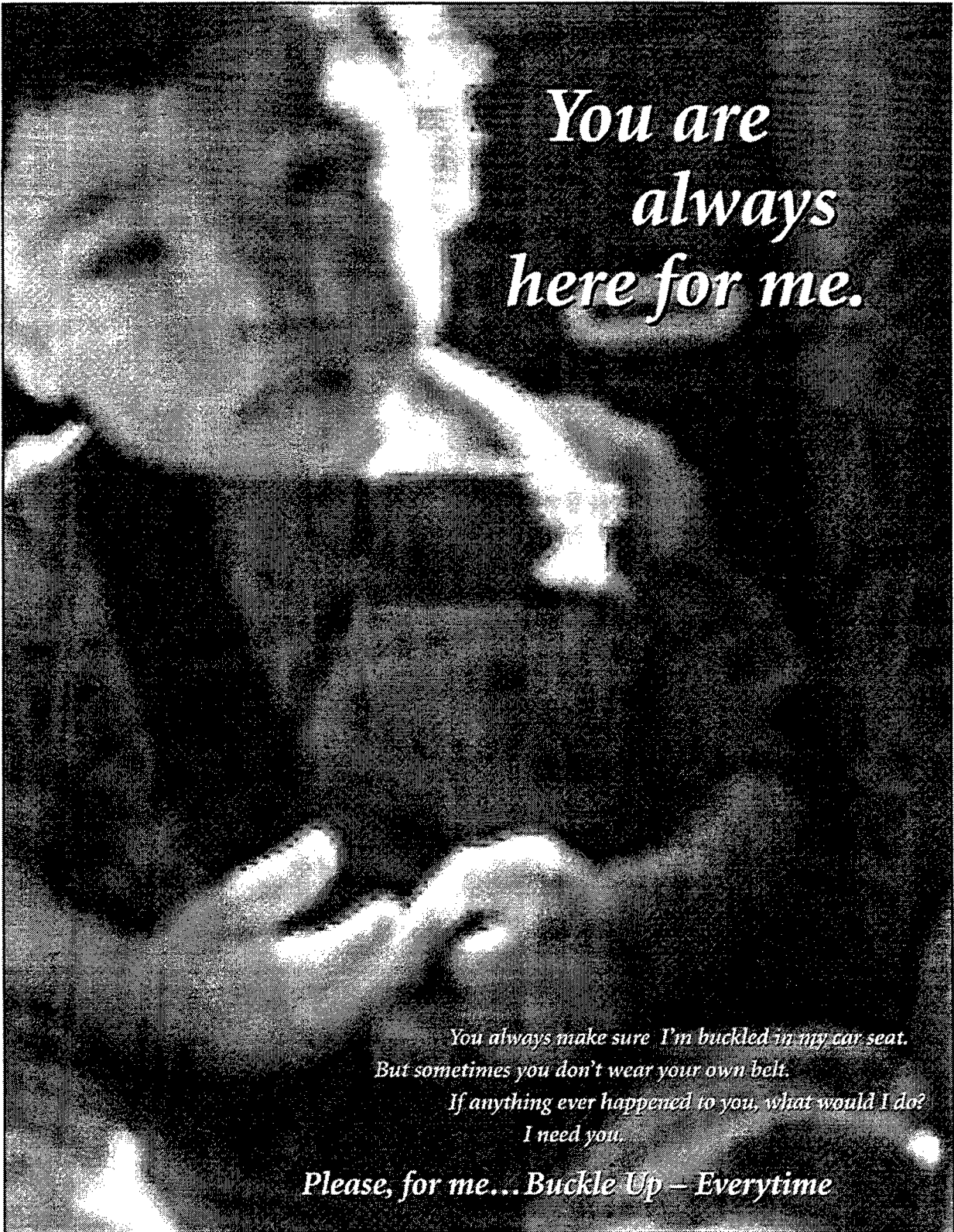


*If you don't  
protect yourself,  
you're not  
protecting me.*

*You always make sure I'm buckled in my car seat.  
But sometimes you don't wear your own belt.  
If anything ever happened to you, what would I do?  
I need you.*

*Please, for me... Buckle Up – Everytime*

**FIGURE 2**



The alternate headline, "You Are Always There For Me" was received less favorably, although respondents reacted more positively to it being rephrased as the question, "Will You Always Be Here For Me?" because it forces the reader to respond.

*"I like the other one [You Are Always There For Me], it's a more sentimental message." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"A picture like that and 'What would I do without you?' - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"What about 'Will you always be here for me?' " - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"You could run these on the radio with a child's voice." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

*"If I see a little kid I'm going to read it." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

Another idea was to move the poster tagline "Please, for me, buckle up every time," to the headline for the poster. Some respondents commented that this version would be good as a billboard, where there should be little text to read.

*"If you just put, 'Please for me....' it would be enough. Like for a billboard." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"You only get four seconds to catch attention. You could use what's down there on the bottom; get straight to the point." - - Wichita, males 25-34.*

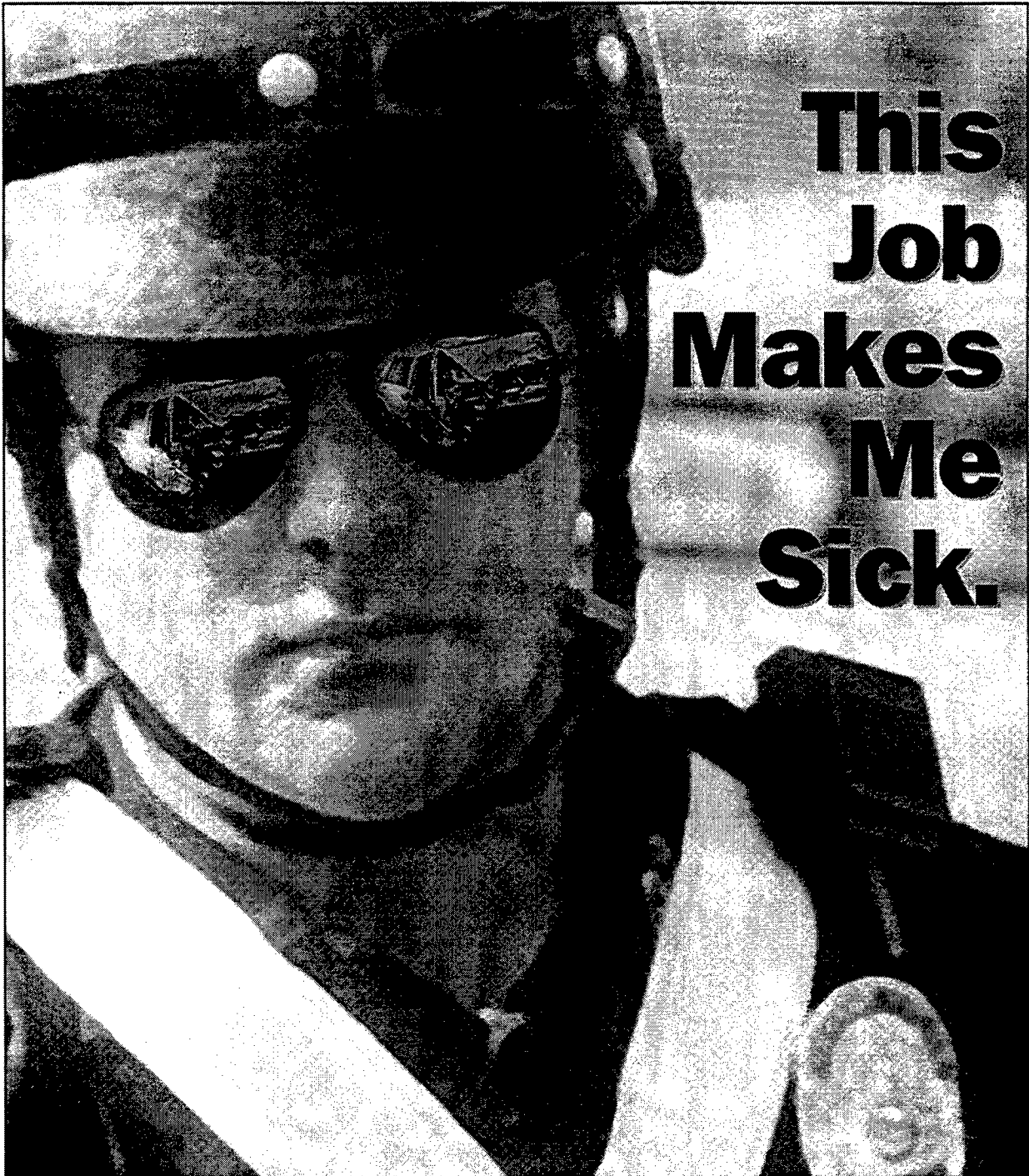
*"Put it in child's writing." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"You don't necessarily have to have children of your own to relate." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"If you have anything like, 'Buckle up, Mommy,' you'd pay attention." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

In marked contrast to their reactions to the "Protecting Children" concept, the respondents offered an overwhelmingly negative reaction to the "This Job Makes Me Sick" concept (Figure 3). This treatment, which features a law enforcement officer who acknowledges that he dislikes having to stop people for seat belt violations, but does so because he hates seeing the carnage when people don't wear belts, was not viewed as believable. Also, most respondents remarked that because they have negative perceptions involving police officers, this concept was unappealing. Further, they said the headline, "This Job Makes Me Sick" is

**FIGURE 3**



**This  
Job  
Makes  
Me  
Sick.**

Seeing people scraped off the road because they didn't wear their seat belts is enough to turn anyone's stomach. I try to prevent this by writing

tickets to those who don't buckle up. I wish I didn't have to write them at all it would mean that people are buckling up and staying alive.

**Buckle Up - Everytime.**



confusing and can be interpreted to mean that the officer does not like his job. Some participants suggested that the police officer should be made to look more caring and compassionate.

*"I'd just laugh and go on. I wouldn't take the time to read it." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"He said he doesn't like to write tickets, but I feel every time I've been pulled over I've been nailed for everything he could give me." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"It's like saying that policemen don't like their jobs." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"We all hate cops." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Police have a negative image. It's terrible, but it's true." - Akron, females 16-20.*

Most of the groups spontaneously suggested that the poster would be more effective if it featured an emergency medical technician (EMT) or another first responder at a crash site.

*"I don't like cops. Maybe an ambulance, or a picture of a person inside the car, all crunched up." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Use a paramedic instead of a cop." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"I think EMTs see worse, they see everything." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"An ER person would be better." - Sioux Falls, males 25-34.*

The two treatments of the "What Have You Got to Lose" concept (Figures 4 and 5) elicited mostly negative reactions, although some respondents indicated they could see the potential benefit of using humor and an unorthodox message as a motivator. Still, most comments suggested that neither treatment was particularly attention-getting or stimulating, and did not provide believable information about the cost savings associated with seat belt use.

With regard to the first treatment, a number of respondents commented that the image of a toll booth is somewhat irrelevant to their lives, given that they do not travel on toll roads. They added that perhaps this image would have greater impact on either the east or west coast.

**FIGURE 4**



**Why are you handing over your money?**

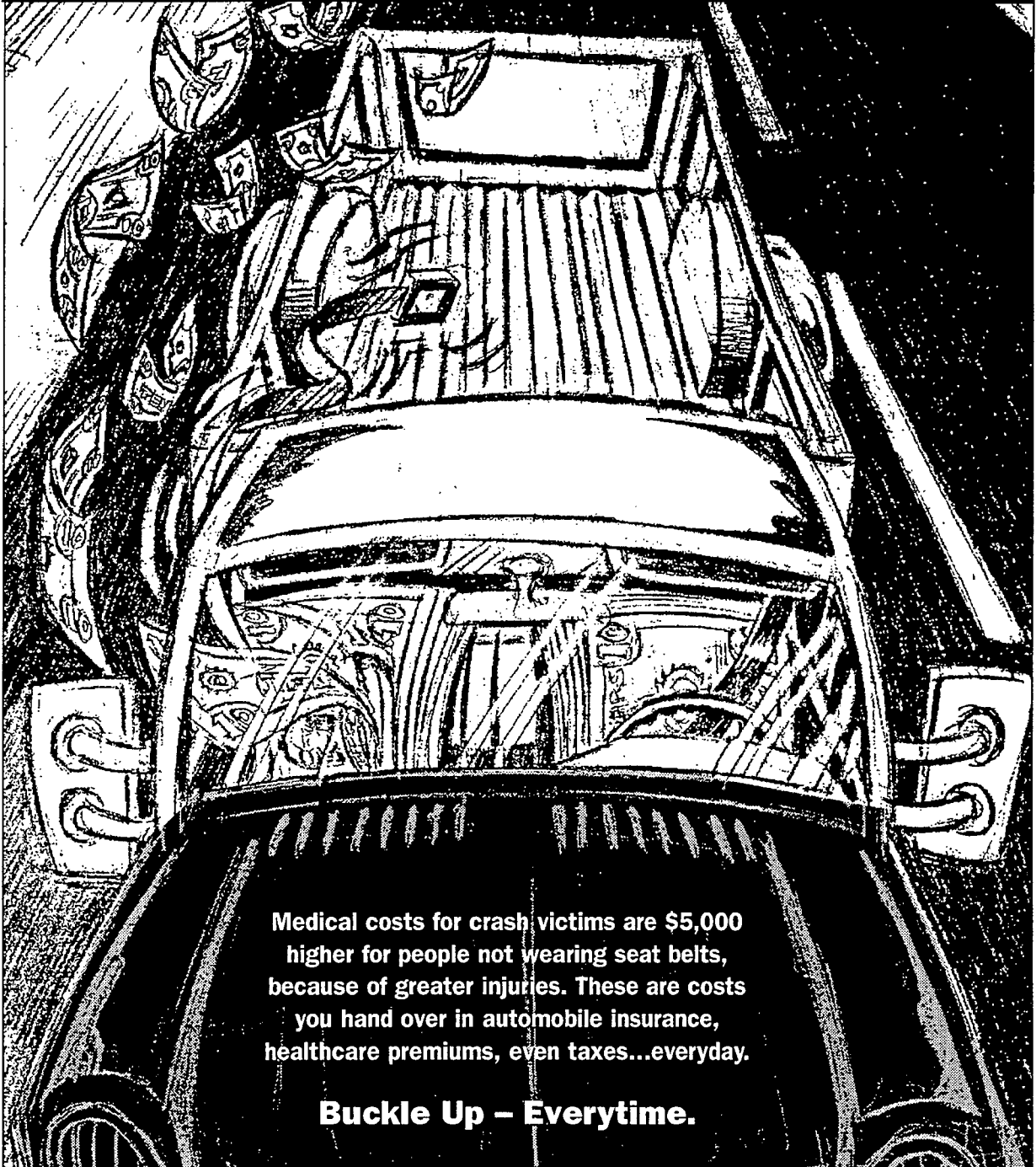
Medical costs for crash victims are \$5,000 higher for persons not wearing seat belts, because of injuries.

These costs are passed on to everyone as higher insurance premiums, healthcare costs, even taxes. Always wear your seat belt. Otherwise, the costs may be higher than you think.

**Buckle Up - Everytime**

**FIGURE 5**

# How much is wearing your seat belt worth to you?



Medical costs for crash victims are \$5,000 higher for people not wearing seat belts, because of greater injuries. These are costs you hand over in automobile insurance, healthcare premiums, even taxes...everyday.

**Buckle Up – Everytime.**

*"It looks like a Far Side cartoon. You might think they're making a joke." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"I wouldn't read it because it says seat belt at the top. The headline is enough to take away my interest." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"A lot of parents pay for their car insurance." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"It's not an issue for us now." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"That would not do in Sioux Falls, Iowa, or Nebraska. We don't have tolls." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

The second treatment of this concept, which shows money flying out of the cab of a pickup truck, was viewed by some as more attention-getting simply because the image of money will grab most people's attention. They added again, however, that the body text in the illustration lacks imagination, believability, and impact.

*"[The image of money flying out of a truck] It's simple and to the point. Money flying out the window." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"That's OK. A little humor." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"The pickup truck makes a little more of a statement than the other one; it brings it home." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Money catches people's eyes." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

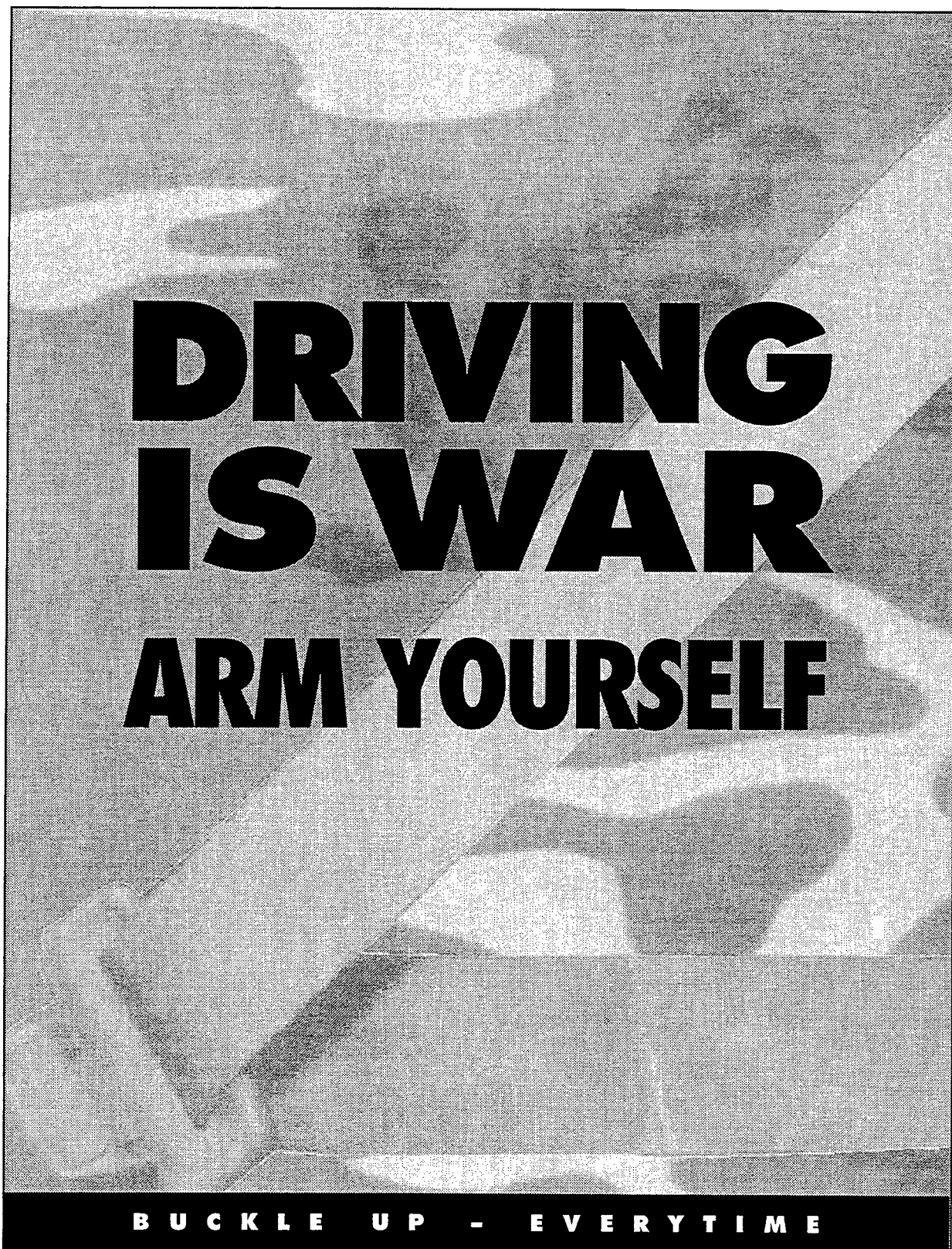
*"That wouldn't affect me." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I don't think about it." - Akron, males, 16-20.*

*"It's more a life or death thing than a money thing." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

The final print concept (Figure 6) was received more favorably by the male respondents, particularly the younger males, many of whom believe that at times, driving is war. Some of the older male, and most of the female respondents, indicated that while they liked the simplicity of this concept, they questioned its believability. Even among the drivers who said they do feel that at times, driving is war, they commented that they do not see wearing a seat belt as arming themselves. A number also commented that the phrase, "Arm Yourself" may inspire road rage and aggressive driving for some individuals.

**FIGURE 6**



They suggested instead that it might be more believable to use the words, "Protect Yourself" or "Defend Yourself." They also noted that this concept would lend itself well for use as a billboard.

*"It sounds realistic in some cases, like it really is war on Kellogg (Avenue)." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Its short and to the point. Its the easiest to remember." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"To me, driving is like war." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"That's how you feel when you're driving." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"It would be good for men or young boys [teens.]" - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"I could see it as a billboard." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"My brother would look at it and think, 'Yeah, and I'm going to win!'" - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"It sounds like you've got to carry a weapon when you're driving." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"I would associate 'Protect' or 'Defend yourself' more [with seat belts]." - Akron, females 25-34.*

### **Radio Public Service Announcement (PSA) Concepts**

Two radio public service announcements were tested during the second wave of groups. Both spots were recorded outside a studio without professional talent. The scripts for both appear in Figure 7.

Respondents were instructed to listen to both spots and comment on their content and believability. They were told that both spots were in "rough form," and were asked to consider their impact if professional talent was used.

The respondents indicated that neither spot was particularly stimulating or motivating. The first radio spot, which focused on the various dangerous things the "other driver" might do to cause a crash, seemed too long and did not stimulate visual images, which the respondents indicated is an important aspect of a good radio message. Moreover, the respondents remarked that the scripted dialogue was not believable because they would not say things that way. However, they noted that the kind of language they would use when confronted

## FIGURE 7

### #1 RADIO

#### "The Other Driver"

- Voice 1: "Whaa, What the...he just ran a stop sign!"
- Voice 2: "Hey, that guy cut me off!"
- Voice 3: "Did you see that driver cut across two lanes? What was she thinking?"
- Voice 4: "I really wish this guy would get off my tail!"
- Voice 5: "Are you going to drive, or talk on the phone?"
- Narrator: "Always buckle up. You never know what will happen next."

### #2 RADIO

#### "It Happens"

- Narrator: "When you least expect it...it happens."
- Voice 1: "I just ran out of a quart of milk."
- Voice 2: "Mine happened behind the high school."
- Voice 3: "I didn't even bother to put my shoes on."
- Voice 4: "I was just on my way to Dave's. I didn't think I'd end up like this."
- Narrator: "What happened to these people was unexpected. They were all involved in serious crashes close to home. Always buckle your seat belt."

with similar driving situations was too strong and objectionable to include on the radio.

*"It requires a visual." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"I definitely would have changed the channel." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"If somebody cuts me off, I'm not going to say simply, 'He cut me off.'" - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"It needs more emotion." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Maybe some sound effects, like slamming on the brakes." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"Sounds like they're whining." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

Respondents were more positive in their reactions to the second radio PSA, which emphasizes that many crashes occur close to home. Some mentioned that this spot effectively misdirected their attention and stimulated greater curiosity by "hiding" the main message until the end. Still, most comments indicated that the spot seemed too long, and that the listener would lose interest.

*"Behind the high school' happens half way through the commercial, so it grabs your attention again." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"You follow it and wonder what the hell is happening." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"You have to make it catchy at the beginning. Few people would listen to the whole thing." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

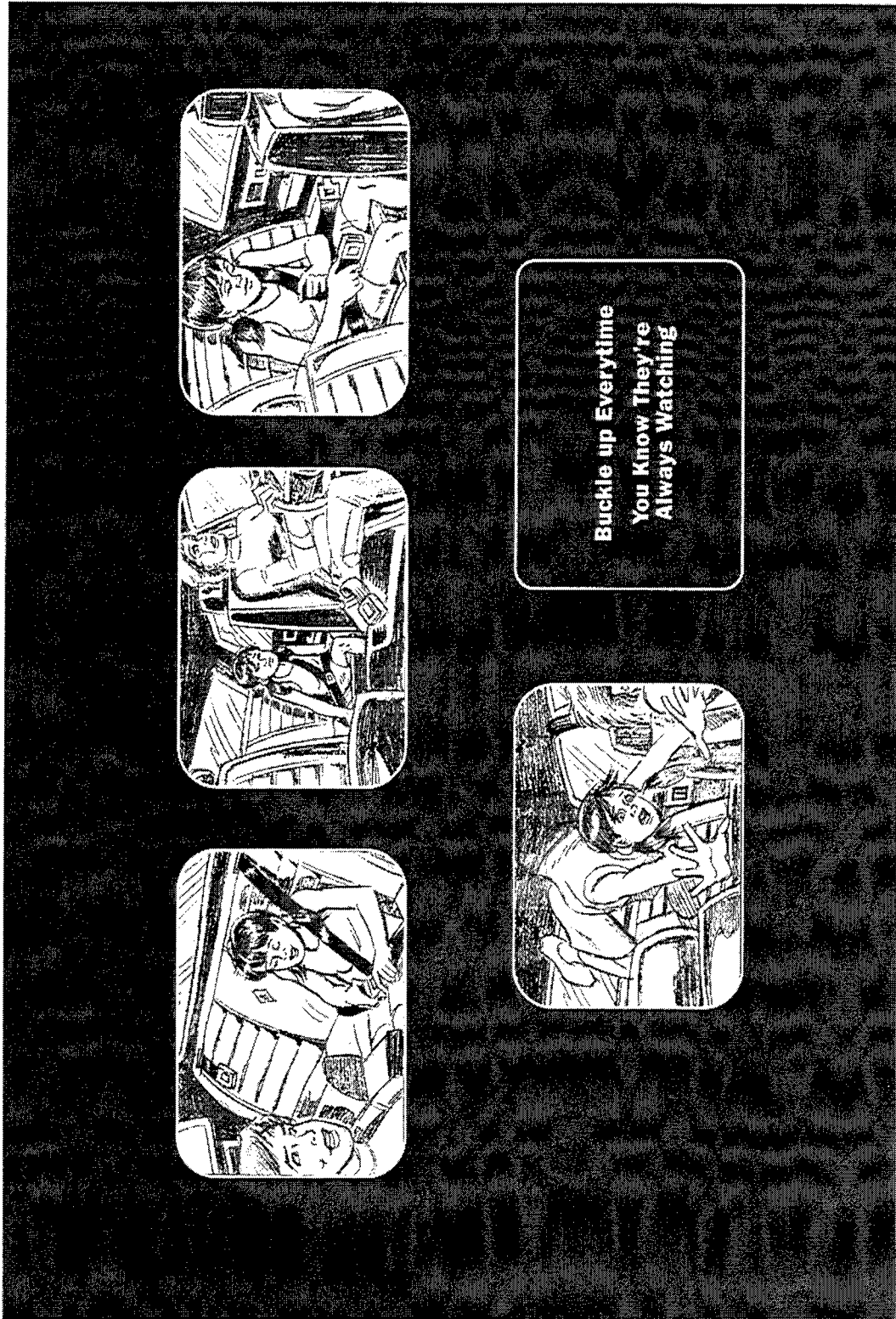
### **Video Public Service Announcement (PSA) Concepts**

Respondents from all focus groups conducted during the first wave commented on the benefit of using real-life stories to motivate behavior change. They specifically mentioned that the PSAs using actual home video enabled them to "put a face" on the innocent victims of drunk drivers. They described these PSAs as powerful and memorable, and emphasized that they were able to emotionally relate to these real-life victims.

Three video concepts were tested during the second wave. One of the video concepts was presented as a storyboard (Figure 8). The other two were 30-second rough edits of home videos, with text slates at the end.



**FIGURE 8**



The storyboard showed a young child riding in the back seat who observes her mother is not using a seat belt, then unbuckles her own seat belt, and is thrown forward in a crash. Both female groups and the older male groups reacted favorably to this concept, emphasizing that the storyline involving a child being injured was attention-getting; and the implication of behaving responsibly and serving as a good role model for children was thought-provoking. The tagline, "Remember, they're always watching you" was described as believable, with many of the respondents providing anecdotes reinforcing this contention.

*"Short, sweet, to the point!" - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"That's good. It will get parents thinking." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Its true. Parents will relate the message to things other than that." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"The image of a kid getting hurt always grabs your attention." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"Everyone knows that children do as they see." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"You forget they notice." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"You want to be like your mom and dad. Look, all I have to do is push this button and unbuckle the belt." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

The younger male groups said that although this concept shows a situation that could happen, it would not capture their attention.

*"If I saw a commercial with kids my age, doing what I do, hanging out with my friends, it would probably hit me more." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"If you want to reach a certain age group, make the driver be of that age group." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

The first 30-second video PSA began with a home video of a little girl's birthday party, with her friends and brothers singing Happy Birthday. At the end of the song, she blows out the six candles, the video freezes, and transitions to four slates with written text, which tell the viewer that a week after the party, the girl's mother was involved in a serious car crash, but because she was wearing a seat belt, she escaped serious injury.

Again, the female groups and older male groups reacted most favorably to this concept, although a number of younger males also said the use of home video and the image of a child's birthday party might initially stimulate their interest. The respondents suggested that this concept could be improved by including more home video footage of interaction between the mother and daughter, emphasizing the depth and caring in their relationship. Also, they opted for fewer and shorter slates with narrative at the end. Some felt the slates without audio caught their attention, while others felt that too much reading would make viewers lose interest in the PSA.

They had mixed reactions to the idea that a person had survived because of wearing a seat belt. Some respondents said that stories with tragic endings are more attention-getting and memorable, however others said that based on previous "drunk driving" PSAs, they have come to expect a tragic ending and see a positive ending as both different and attention-getting.

The participants liked the idea, suggested by the focus group moderator, of using a mix of "home video" PSAs that end with different outcomes - some where someone dies or is badly injured, and some where the subject survives. That would introduce the element of surprise, with the viewer not knowing what happened to the main characters until the end of the PSA. Such unpredictability would stimulate viewer interest.

*"It would make you watch it to see what happens at the end." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"The negative endings are typical. The happy endings make you think about it. You'll say, 'Those are the seat belt guys, not the drunk driving guys.'" - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"It was good, different that the daughter was OK, that she wasn't in an accident." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"I like that turn. The drunk driving ads are always negative. This catches you off guard." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"As you're watching, you say, 'OK, somebody died, somebody died,' and then you come to the end and they didn't. Its a surprise ending and you think, 'That's good.'" - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"It would be more effective if it was tragic." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"A negative way [outcome] would have been good. If they showed the car." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"It's always more powerful when the child or mother gets killed." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"The attention is on the little girl, not on her mom." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"I like it. It makes me think that the next time I go out, I could be like her mother, so I'd better wear that darned thing." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"The mother and daughter need to interact more." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"They left out the interaction between the mother and the child. They gotta get mom and the kid together more." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"When there's no sound, you wonder what happened to the TV and it makes you look." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I've seen an ad like this before, where it goes totally silent. TV isn't usually totally silent, so it got my attention [referring to the slates with text at the end.]" - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Just seeing words gets your attention more focused. Plus, it was a positive ending." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"Less words at the end [would improve it.]" - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"It was too wordy; too long." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

The final rough video PSA started with a scene with members of a high school football team standing at attention on the sidelines during the playing of the Star Spangled Banner. The national anthem continues, as the video breaks away to a still-picture of a crashed vehicle with the air bag deployed and covered with blood. The video returns to a close-up of a high school basketball player during pre-game warm-ups. This is followed by a still-picture close-up of the interior of the crashed vehicle. The home video then continues with a scene of the teen riding in a convertible during the school's homecoming parade. The background National Anthem music stops abruptly and the video transitions to a high school auditorium, where the teen is competing in a talent competition and completes his brief interview with a line about traveling across time zones so that he could live forever, which draws cheers from his classmates. This is followed by four slates with written text that inform the viewer that the teen was killed shortly after in a crash near his home. It adds that the tragedy would have been avoided had he been using his seat belt.

This concept was received most favorably by the younger male groups, with most indicating they could readily identify with the high school images and the life of the victim. Also, they remarked that the use of crash footage in the spot intensified their interest, even though it tipped them off to the direction the PSA was going.

*"He died. That's important." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"I could relate to his attitude." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"Even though you know what's gonna happen, it keeps your attention." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"You [should] have the parents do the narration because even though the kid feels he's invulnerable, [he needs to know that] his parents' emotions aren't. A teen who is watching will think, 'God, my parents will miss me.'" - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"I think it would have been more effective if it had been a girl." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

This PSA was also viewed as effective by the other groups. Younger females saw the PSA as relevant to their current lives, and older males indicated they could still relate to the high school venue used. While older females said they have largely separated from high school, the tragedy of the story, coupled with their sensitivity to the idea of losing a child, held their interest. Suggestions to improve the PSA included fewer video segments, better crash footage, and fewer and shorter slates at the end. Again, there were mixed reactions to the slates at the end being silent.

*"The home video personalizes it." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"That's good for our age group. We see that every Friday [in school]." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I would watch this [if it was on TV], especially since he's our age." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"It was kind of chilling because you knew something was going to happen." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"I liked how you show that he's really enjoying his life, and then you show the car." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"I like that one. It has impact; something to make you think." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"The image of the car was good because it tells you where they're headed. It keeps you there. You're not going to get up and walk away." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"It showed also that the air bag doesn't work if you don't use a seat belt." Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"I think its important to tie in coming back from work or a football practice, not coming home from a party, but an everyday thing." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"It was wonderful. It hits teens." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"It gets my attention because we either have kids or know kids." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"A happy life that's ripped away." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"The reality of the car - you see there was a tragedy there." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"You show you still need your seat belt even if you have air bags." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"Maybe if they cut the words down to, 'Unfortunately he didn't [live forever]. Ian wasn't wearing his seat belt.' " - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Do everything the same and then have a narrator at the end say, 'He didn't [live forever]. Buckle up.' " - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"You could have his parents say what the last two slides would say. That would be kind of catchy." - Wichita, males 25-34.*

*"At the end, instead of the slates, have family or friends saying that stuff. It gives it more of a personal connection." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

Many respondents commented that they found the reference to the crash being close to home to be distracting, irrelevant, and even annoying. Their remarks suggested that when using home videos as a PSA element, it may be more useful to simply stress the importance of always wearing a seat belt.

## Slogan Concepts

During the second wave concept testing, the respondents were asked to offer reactions to the following ten slogans:

**You Never Know Who's On the Road**  
**Put the Damn Belts On Already**  
**Make Your Short Drive a Safe Drive**  
**Buckle-Up or Eat Glass**  
**Seat Belts - Because Its a Jungle Out There**  
**Seat Belts - You Never Know When You'll Need Them**  
**If You're A Full-Time Driver, Why Be a Part-Time User?**  
**Seat Belts - Why Don't You Wear Them?**  
**Seat Belts - It Just Takes Once**  
**There's Too Much to Lose**

There was wide variation both within and between groups in reactions to the different slogans, although most respondents offered that **Make Your Short Drive A Safe Drive**; **Seat Belts - Because its A Jungle Out There**; and **If You're A Full-Time Driver, Why Be a Part-Time User** were not catchy and were ineffective. Comments varied for the other seven slogans.

The younger respondents reacted more favorably to the most controversial slogan, **Put the Damn Belts On Already**; and to the most graphic slogan, **Buckle Up or Eat Glass**. These slogans seemed consistent with previous focus group findings which emphasize the importance of developing age-appropriate, relevant messages which take into account the offbeat, irreverent, and graphic media preferences of a youthful audience. While some of the older respondents could see the value of such novel slogans for targeting teen drivers, others, particularly the females, expressed concern about the offensive nature of these slogans and the effect that the language might have on younger children.

Comments offered in response to **Put the Damn Belts On Already** included:

*"That is good, you'd talk about it with your friends." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"The more you discuss it the more you'd think about it." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"That one works!" - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"It makes you remember." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"People would be offended, but it would be talked about though!" - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"You could get away with that on MTV." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Older couples, or young kids, may not like it." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"Put it in high schools or colleges!" - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"Kids would notice it." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"I like it, it's comical." - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"It says 'Just do it, we're sick of telling you.'" - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"Just because it's a cuss word doesn't mean it's offensive. You hear that standing in the check-out line." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"For someone like me, throw the 'damn' in and I can relate to it!" - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"I think it's catchy." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"I like it yet I don't like it." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"Why do you have to put that bad word in it?" - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"You wouldn't want your kids to see that!" - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"I wouldn't want my kids telling me that!" - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"As a parent, you're trying to set an example, and you're telling them not to use vulgar language." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

In response to **Buckle-Up or Eat Glass**, the respondents said:

*"It's catchy, offbeat, right to the point." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"It's kind of cool!" - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"It's graphic." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"It's a shock effect." - Akron, females 25-34.*

*"It would be catchy for teens or kids." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*



*"The way it's put, it sounds like a joke." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"You don't really eat glass when you're in a crash." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"What if a little kid sees it and eats glass?" - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

Respondent comments to the other slogans included:

### **You Never Know Who's On the Road**

Some respondents felt that this slogan could be associated with a humorous visual concept about the dangers posed by "the other driver."

*"It would be funny if you used that with a picture of a really old man in a car. Humor always works." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Humor tends to stick with you more." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"That's good when you're driving at night." - Sioux Falls, females 25-34.*

*"Show someone drinking and driving." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"I wouldn't think to buckle my safety belt." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

### **Seat Belts - You Never Know When You'll Need Them**

While some respondents remarked that this slogan was thought-provoking and truthful, some offered that it was not as catchy as the others touting the danger posed by "the other driver."

*"It's a possibility. You don't know what's going to happen. Protect yourself." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"It makes you think about the wrecks where people survive and they didn't have their seat belts on." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"I wouldn't waste time reading the rest." - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"No. It makes you think that maybe sometimes you should wear it and sometimes you don't have to." - Akron, males 25-34.*

### **Seat Belts - Why Don't You Wear Them?**

Some respondents liked this slogan, mentioning that by posing this question, the listener is forced to react and answer. Still, most said that the slogan could be problematic because it might be perceived as having a "nagging" or "preaching" tone.

*"You stop and think 'Why don't I?'" - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"'Why the hell won't you wear them?' - That would catch them." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"It's not catchy." - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"Because I don't feel like it!" - Akron, females 25-34.*

### **Seat Belts - It Just Takes Once**

Most respondents complained that this slogan is too generic, and that they would be more likely to think about pregnancy, AIDS, or drug use when they hear this message.

*"Maybe 'It just takes a second.'" - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"Too vague." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"OK - just wear it one time." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"It's been used so many times for so many things! It's useless." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

*"It's cheesy." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

### **There's Too Much to Lose**

Some respondents indicated that this slogan could be useful when associated with a child-centered message, although many suggested that the headlines and taglines from the two print PSA concepts tested were more effective.

*"Put it with a picture of a pregnant woman and a little boy." - Sioux Falls, females 16-20.*

*"What if you say, 'You're too much to lose,' with the picture of a parent and a kid holding hands and walking." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Show little kids." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"It really sounds kind of bland." - Akron, females 16-20.*

### **Make Your Short Drive a Safe Drive**

Reactions to this slogan were largely negative, with most respondents commenting that it did not seem well-suited for an audience of younger drivers.

*"Something your mom would say." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"OK, Grandma!" - Akron, males 16-20.*

*"Yes, for 60-years and over!" - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

### **Seat Belts - Because Its a Jungle Out There**

Most respondents indicated that this slogan does not seem to be connected to driving, and would not grab their attention. Some said it could, however, be used if some interesting visual concepts were developed to accompany the slogan.

*"It doesn't wow you." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"Seat belts have nothing to do with a jungle. It's cheesy." - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"No. It's a war out there." - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

### **If You're A Full-Time Driver, Why Be a Part-Time User?**

The respondents described this slogan as both boring and ambiguous, and questioned what is meant by a "full-time" driver.

*"I like to be consistent in what I do. That makes me wonder why I don't use them." - Wichita, females 16-20.*

*"Boring." - Wichita, females 25-34.*

*"I would think about drugs." - Wichita, males 16-20.*

*"If I didn't know what you're talking about, I'd be totally clueless." - Akron, females 16-20.*

*"I don't consider myself a full-time driver. It makes me think of a truck driver. Twenty minutes a day doesn't sound like full-time to me." - Akron, males 25-34.*

*"What if you are a part-time driver?" - Sioux Falls, males 16-20.*

## **Spokespersons**

When asked about possible spokespersons for a campaign designed to increase seat belt use among teens and young adults, the respondents suggested that the best spokespersons would include local or "home-grown" personalities, local young persons who had been involved in serious crashes, and nationally-known personalities with a relevant story to share.

For example, in Wichita, a number of respondents suggested that professional football star Barry Sanders or country music singer Martina McBride, both of whom were born in Wichita and maintain a strong connection with the city, could serve as attention-getting and believable spokespersons. Respondents in Sioux Falls mentioned natives Mary Hart and Tom Brokaw as possible spokespersons. Respondents from Akron were unable to identify any national personalities from their area.

Respondents at all sites suggested that a young crash survivor from their area could serve as an impactful spokesperson. When asked if it would be more effective to hear from a survivor who had escaped serious injury because of using a seat belt; or one who had suffered permanent injury (e.g., paralysis) because of not using a seat belt, the respondents said that the latter would probably be a more effective spokesperson. Many commented that a small group forum in which they could interact personally with someone whose life was irrevocably changed because of not using a seat belt would be an excellent learning venue. Such a meeting would present an opportunity for them to connect both intellectually and emotionally with the presenter, increasing the likelihood for both an immediate and long-lasting increase in seat belt use. In contrast, they said that large groups (e.g., school assemblies) are not good venues, because there is little personal investment in such gatherings.

When queried about the usefulness of national personalities as spokespersons, most respondents indicated that unless that person had a relevant story to share, they would lack credibility and believability. For example, professional race car drivers, who are well-known to young male and female NASCAR fans, could talk about the importance of always wearing seat belts, not only in their race cars, but also in their personal vehicles.

## **Media Use and Preferences**

The respondents emphasized the importance of a multiple media campaign of sufficient time duration to reinforce the importance of always wearing a seat belt. While there was no clear-cut direction offered by the respondents for the optimal media mix, it appeared that the greatest resources should be devoted to print and television. Still, some respondents remarked that radio is an important venue, especially since it can reach the target audience at exactly the time that they may need to hear the message. They added that if radio is used, the spots must be consistent with a station's format, cleverly-done, and interesting enough that they would listen to the spot more than once. As noted earlier, the two radio PSAs tested in the second wave were not well-received. When the respondents were told about the content of some other NHTSA radio PSAs that were created and tested a year ago with young urban respondents, they reacted positively. These previous radio PSAs included one seat belt spot that sounded initially like a condom advertisement, and another that asked the viewer to imagine a number of graphically violent images, and then tied these images into what it is like to hit the windshield of your vehicle.

## **Community Programs**

Respondents at all sites remarked that a continuous community program focusing attention on the need to always wear a seat belt could be beneficial. They added that by keeping the issue in the public eye, it is likely that many people would adopt the desired behavior, and would develop the habit of always wearing a seat belt.

In addition to a localized, multiple media campaign over the year, the respondents said that a highly-publicized community kick-off event (e.g., a seat belt safety fair), radio contests, other incentive programs sponsored by the private sector of the community (e.g. restaurants, movie theaters, insurance companies), employer incentive programs (e.g., Wellness Programs), and outreach efforts from the emergency medical community and service organizations would be needed to impress the public that seat belt use is a very important matter. Also, the respondents mentioned that a major effort should be made to provide seat belt safety education to children, both in- and out-of-school. They commented that reaching children at an impressionable age would not only make children more aware of how important it is for them to always wear a seat belt now, but would also likely make them long-term seat belt users. Further, by educating children, it is likely that they would become seat belt safety "advocates" who would constantly remind older siblings, parents, and others how important it is to always wear a seat belt.

## **GROUP DIFFERENCES AFFECTING PROGRAMMATIC DECISIONS**

The current research study included age, sex, and geographic segmentations. Prominent group differences were noted between the younger and older respondents and also between the male and female respondents. There seemed to be little difference in respondents' attitudes and feelings across geographic boundaries, with the exception of a stronger feeling of community pride and enthusiasm for community programs noted in Wichita, Kansas.

### **Age Differences**

The younger respondents in the study, ages 16-20 years, were quite vocal about the importance of message themes, format, and content being directed specifically to members of the MTV generation. They were especially critical of concepts that seemed to be more appropriate to older people; not just to their parents or grandparents, but even to people in their mid-twenties. Their preferences are for brief, flashy, and offbeat messages, or for real life stories involving teens.

Younger males indicated that they are especially attracted to messages involving sports, violence, sex, and sarcastic or irreverent humor. Younger females also indicated that they appreciate offbeat themes and humor, as well as dramatic and poignant stories about peers. While a number of females also indicate they have grown accustomed to violence in the media, they tend to prefer softer, relationship-oriented themes.

The older respondents, ages 25-34, were more "settled" in life than their younger counterparts. Many were married and had started families. While they looked back fondly on their high school days, they indicated they have gone through extensive social and emotional change since their teen years. When responding to the more "unusual" concepts (e.g., the 'Buckle Up or Eat Glass' slogan) they often commented that these would be appealing to a high school-aged audience.

Both the older males and females responded positively to themes focused on family and children. They indicated that regardless of the venue used, they will attend to any marketing that includes the use of children. They also said that any approach which stresses their being a good role model and behaving in a

manner that will benefit their children will have impact. Even the older respondents who were unmarried or did not have children said they tend to be drawn to advertisements featuring children. Some said that this is because they have younger siblings, nieces, and nephews, and also often have friends with children. Others commented that they foresee having children in the near-future.

Older males were less critical than older females when reacting to concepts having violent content or borderline language. The males commented that these messages would certainly catch the attention of a younger audience, who probably need to have the seat belt message reinforced the most. The females agreed that there should be messages targeting younger people, but felt that messages with profane language or violent content might upset younger children and older adults.

Older males indicated that they continue to have an interest in sports, and said that messages involving sports-related themes will capture their attention. They said that even stories featuring younger athletes would be appropriate for them. The older female respondents, unlike their younger counterparts, seemed to have little interest in sports-related themes, and said they would likely not attend to such messages.

### **Geographic Differences**

The respondents were asked to react to the idea of having a well-publicized, community program in their area. While most agreed that such an initiative would likely improve seat belt use, the Akron and Sioux Falls respondents said that an appeal focused around the theme of making their respective area #1 in the state would probably not have widespread appeal. In contrast, the Wichita respondents indicated that they could see the usefulness of such an approach, adding that there is a good deal of community pride in their city.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

An earlier study examining the role of psychological factors affecting seat belt use (*Program Strategies for Increasing Safety Belt Usage in Rural Areas, DOT HS 808 505, November, 1996*) cited individualism and freedom of choice, pragmatism, denial and distortion, fatalism, and cognitive dissonance as possible factors in non-use of seat belts by young male pickup truck drivers living in rural areas.

A number of these psychological factors were again noted in the present study. Many of the respondents, both male and female, living in and around selected metropolitan areas offered that except for young children, seat belt use should be considered a **personal choice** and should not be mandated by law. They also expressed a general disdain for law enforcement officials interfering with matters of personal choice and remarked that it seemed to be a waste of limited resources to have police officers looking for people not wearing seat belts. The younger respondents indicated that they simply do not see themselves as being at-risk for serious injury or death because of a vehicle crash, and added that even when they hear about a fatality involving a young person, they emotionally distance themselves from this information and tell themselves it could never happen to them (**denial, distortion, and projection**). In every group, there were respondents who commented that they are aware of crashes in which the driver and/or passengers survived because they did not use a seat belt. Some also expressed that they have survived low speed crashes close to home when they were not wearing a seat belt, and are afraid that if they had been using one, it might have jammed or malfunctioned so they would have been unable to leave their vehicle. These experiences, both personal and anecdotal, create **cognitive dissonance**, resulting in the fact that some respondents have difficulty reconciling the message, "Seat Belts Save Lives," with real-life events. It is worth noting, however, that the part-time users in this study were far less vocal about this dissonance than were the non-users from the previous study, suggesting that non-users tend to have a greater investment in their perception of seat belts as unsafe devices which cause greater injuries and/or fatalities in many crashes.



During both waves of focus groups, the respondents were asked to discuss reasons why they often do not wear seat belts when traveling short distances. While the preliminary hypothesis focused on the possibility that the individuals' low level of risk-assessment produced insufficient intrapsychic anxiety to motivate consistent seat belt use, the discussions with respondents seemed to contraindicate this risk-assessment/anxiety model. Instead, the respondents commented that the reason they do not consistently use seat belts at such times is that when they enter their vehicle, they are often **inattentive and distractible**, and do not even consider that they are driving. Instead, they are focused on their personal thoughts and concerns, most of which have nothing to do with driving. The only **meaningful discriminative stimuli** (cues) inside and outside the vehicle that set the occasion for seat belt use when driving short distances include transporting children or older adults, traffic congestion, observing dangerous or potentially dangerous drivers, poor weather and/or road conditions, a near-crash incident, and seeing a law enforcement vehicle.

## DISCUSSION

An effective community-based health and safety communication program relies on both epidemiological and consumer research. The epidemiological research points to the recommended health/safety behavior, while the consumer research identifies the values, beliefs, motivations, needs, and behaviors that comprise the “consumer reality.” Both are critical for developing a message strategy aimed at influencing the target audience to change their behavior.

Six key questions must be addressed when developing a message strategy:

- What is the **purpose**?
- Who is the **target**?
- What is the **promise**?
- What is the **support**?
- What is the **image**?
- Where are the **windows**?

In developing meaningful messages, it is also important to identify the “stage of change” that best characterizes the target audience. Persons in the **pre-contemplation stage** are extremely resistant to direct messages advocating change. These persons, who have yet to even consider the importance of adopting a new behavior, strongly resent efforts by perceived authority figures or institutions to tell them “what is best” for them. In contrast, persons in the **contemplation stage** are actively considering change, and have possibly even made initial efforts to alter their behavior toward the desired end. For these individuals, more directly persuasive messages are appropriate vehicles for facilitating change. Persons in the **active stage** have adopted a new belief system consistent with change, and have identified themselves as persons who have adopted behaviors congruent with that belief system. Messages for these individuals need not be as persuasive in content and emotion, but can focus more on reinforcing their commitment to change.

According to the 1996 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety national telephone survey conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), only a very small percentage of the population “rarely” (3%) or “never” (3%) wear a seat belt when driving in a motor vehicle. These persons might be best viewed as pre-contemplators who are resistant to messages advocating increased seat belt use.

The findings for the other survey respondents were noteworthy in that 29% of those who said they use their seat belts “most of the time” also said they did not wear them in the past day, and another 38% said they did not wear them in the past week. Even among self-professed “all the time” users, 4% admitted they had not worn their seat belt in the past day, and another 5% had not done so during the past week. This suggests discrepancies between many persons’ perceptions of themselves as seat belt users, and their actual behavior. It also suggests that many persons in the “most of time” and “all the time” groups may be viewed as contemplators who still require persuasive messages to move them to the point where their actions are consistent with their stated belief system.

The above data indicate that increasing the frequency of seat belt use among the more motivated part time users (contemplators) may have a greater impact on raising the national rate of seat belt usage than attempting to transform non-users (pre-contemplators) into users. The challenge faced by safety professionals is to influence part-time users (the **target**) so that their behavior becomes more consistent with this belief and they become active full-time users (the **purpose**).

The present study used a consumer qualitative research technique, focus groups, to identify reasons underlying part-time seat belt use. The information obtained from the focus group respondents was then analyzed to determine salient messages and strategies for increasing seat belt use among self-reported part-time users (contemplators). The study examined mechanical, informational, and motivational influences on their attitudes and behavior, and determined strategic intrapersonal and community approaches for addressing the problem of part-time usage.

The focus group findings revealed that while contemplators readily believe most crashes occur close to home and that in most crashes, seat belts provide increased occupant protection, they resent mandated seat belt usage (except for infants and children), which they feel violates their freedom of choice. They further tend to view law enforcement officials as antagonistic and see them as ineffective, if not counter-productive, spokespersons for seat belt usage. They do not believe messages touting the societal cost benefit associated with increased seat belt use, and therefore do not find these messages to be personally motivating. They feel that medical professionals who deal immediately with victims of crash trauma (first responders) are good spokespersons for seat belt use, as are people who have a relevant personal story to share. They see community-based incentive programs both as beneficial for increasing awareness of and motivation for seat belt use.

The contemplators provided information indicating that their seat belt use is related to risk-assessment. Situations which contain cues suggesting possible threat or danger create sufficient anxiety and arousal to prompt belt use. When they are transporting children or older adults, traveling in hazardous weather and/or along dangerous roads, or observant of reckless or potentially-dangerous drivers, contemplators will put on their seat belt. These discriminative stimuli, or cues, effectively set the stage for action, and remind them that seat belts will provide increased protection.

In contrast, seat belts use for contemplators is less consistent in situations where they are not reminded of potential threat or danger associated with driving. They experience minimal driving-related anxiety or arousal when they are alone during their day-to-day, routine short distance driving, where their thoughts are more focused on personal concerns, daily life events, and their immediate destination.

So for the 16-20 year old and 25-34 year old male and female seat belt contemplators, what are the realistic **promises** that can be offered as a motivation for seat belt use? For the young males and females, one effective promise is that seat belts will provide increased protection for you, and will make it more likely that you will be able to continue to enjoy all the positive aspects of life (e.g., social, recreational) as you move through your teen years into early adulthood. Another believable promise for a young person is that using a seat belt will help protect you from the dangerous actions of all the terrible “other drivers” on the road.

For the older males and females, an effective promise is that if you always use a seat belt, you will not only serve as a good role model for your children, but also will have an increased likelihood of being around to enjoy and care for them. Also, the promise mentioned earlier pertaining to always using a seat belt in order to defend or protect yourself against the dangerous actions of the “other driver” is believable.

In order to make the aforementioned promises believable (the **support**), it is necessary to develop messages and public information and education (PI&E) materials that reinforce the respective **images** held by the different target audiences. To best accomplish this, a variety of venues, themes, times, and places (the **windows**) need to be used to support these promises and promote the desired image. For example, for young males, who want to be perceived as offbeat, fun-loving, irresistible, and invincible, PI&E materials such as the high school “jock” video PSA and the irreverent “Put the Damn Belts On Already” message will likely resonate. Also, graphic multiple media materials which show the gruesome aftermath of crashes will grab their attention, as will personal stories from local peers whose lives have been changed forever because they did not use a seat belt. For young females, who want to be perceived as fun-loving, caring, empathic, and even at times maternal, PI&E materials such as the

little girl's birthday party and the high school video PSAs, and the other multiple media concepts featuring young children will prove useful. For the older males and females, any emotionally-laden multiple media concepts depicting children and parent-child relationships will reinforce their image as sensitive caregivers. A strong "hook" for them is raising the possibility that if they don't always use a seat belt, their child may have to grow-up without them, or they may be unable to provide adequate care for their child. Older males, many of whom still see themselves as athletic, will also likely attend to messages with sports-related themes.

In addition to the importance of using creative and eye-catching multiple media PI&E materials, the respondents indicated that a successful seat belt campaign must include community supports. They remarked that they believe full-time seat belt use requires establishing a new habit, but emphasized that this can only occur if the issue of seat belt use is consistently promoted. Venues such as community events, incentive programs, radio contests, early childhood education, wellness programs, and presentations by relevant spokespersons were mentioned during the groups. Many part-time seat belt users agreed that a well-organized and highly publicized year-long program would result in a marked increase in seat belt use in their community.



## **APPENDIX A - MODERATOR GUIDE FOR WAVE 1**

### **Attitudes and Feelings about Driving**

What are some of the things you like about driving? Dislike?

When is your favorite time to drive? Least favorite?

What types of things influence the way you drive? - probe for whether respondents drive differently at different times; in different places; with different people; why they drive differently

How do you drive differently in these situations? - probe for risky vs. conservative

### **Concerns, Anxieties, and Perceptions of Risk**

There are certain things that concern people in their day-to-day lives; for example, health, family, and paying the rent. Are there other concerns you would add to this list for males/females your age? Which would you say are the most frequent for males/females your age? the most important

What kinds of concerns, if any, do you have when you are driving? - probe for perceptions about safety; driving alone vs. having a passenger present; worries about how others drive

When are these concerns most intense?

What types of things raise these concerns for you? - probe for relevant experiences (e.g., most frightening experience); having been involved in a crash

Is there anything that raises these concerns for you at times when you are not driving? - probe for intrusive thoughts, reactions to media, reactions to other anecdotal reports

How do you deal with these concerns?

Do you ever think about the possibility of being involved in a crash?

What types of things cause you to think about this possibility?

Does this ever affect the way in which you drive? If so, how?

## **Factors Relating to Belt Use**

What do you think about the overall usefulness of seat belts?

How effective do you believe seat belts are in reducing serious injuries in a crash? - probe for save more vs. injure more

Do you have any concerns about seat belts? If so, what are they, and how does this affect your use of them?

All of you have indicated that while you use a seat belt some or most of time; sometimes you don't. Why? What accounts for the times you use, and don't use, your seat belt?

I'd like you to tell me the sequence of things you usually do between the time you get in your vehicle and the time you actually start driving?

At what point do you typically fasten your seat belt after you get in your vehicle? - probe for before vs. after starting the vehicle; before vs. after the vehicle is moving; how long after the vehicle has been moving; specific cues that prompt them to buckle-up if they do so after the vehicle is moving

I'd like you to tell me the sequence of things you usually do between the time you get in your vehicle and the time you actually start driving (e.g. adjust mirror, turn on radio)?

Is the sequence always the same, or do you do it differently at different times? Why?

What types of things have interrupted your normal sequence of buckling-up? - probe for what interrupts it

Have you had times when you realized you were not wearing your seat belt, even though you meant to do so? If so, what caused you to not buckle up?

## **Proposed Solutions and Brainstorming**

All vehicles have reminders (e.g., chimes, idiot light) to buckle up. Are these reminders effective? Why or why not?

Is there anything you think might be effective in the vehicle for reminding people to buckle-up?

Do you think there are some technological or engineering adjustments that could be made in the vehicle that would get people to buckle up more?



What is your reaction to the use of interlocks (e.g., seat belt to radio; seat belt to AC; seat belt to ignition) to get people to buckle up all the time?

What might be some incentives (positive rewards) to encourage people your age to always buckle-up? - probe for lower insurance rates, coupons, etc.

For every five people killed in crashes who were not wearing set belts, three would have survived had they been wearing them. What is your reaction to this information? How would publicizing statistical information such as this influence the behavior of people you know? - probe for how much statistical information such as this would influence their belt use choice ?

What other kinds of statistical information, if any, would be meaningful and motivating?

How would you suggest this information be presented?

What thoughts do you have about how seat belt laws affect decisions to buckle-up? - probe for perceived importance of primary vs. secondary law

What about the possibility of receiving a ticket? How would this affect belt use decisions? - probe for perceptions of actual enforcement

What would need to be done to make you believe that if you don't wear your seat belt, you are at risk for receiving a ticket?

### **Concept-Testing**

What types of approaches, if any, can you recall that have been designed to grab your attention and influence your behavior? - probe for memorable multi-media materials; state/local campaigns

Which would you say were the most effective and why?

What would make them better?

We've brought along some materials that have been developed recently to encourage drivers to buckle-up. I'd like to share some of these with you, and get your reactions.

[The moderator will present a number of print, radio, and television concepts; one-at-a-time, to the respondents, and obtain reactions regarding their appeal and possible effectiveness]

I'd like you all to put on your creative hats and offer some other approaches that might be useful for encouraging people to always buckle-up.

How useful do you think it is to use fear to motivate people to buckle-up? What, if anything, might be more effective than playing on this kind of motivation?

What is your reaction to the fact that many states are presently considering establishing primary seat belt laws and increasing overall enforcement? What impact, if any, do you think this will have on belt use?

Is there anything we didn't ask you that you would have liked us to ask?

## **APPENDIX B - MODERATOR GUIDE FOR WAVE 2**

### **I. INTRODUCTION [5 minutes]**

Hello, my name is ( ) and I would like to thank you for coming today/tonight. During the next two hours, we're going to discuss a number of topics related to seat belt use. You will also be viewing a number of ideas the Department of Transportation is considering for the purpose of promoting increased seat belt usage for young people, particularly at times and in situations where they may often not wear one.

Before we begin, I would like to give you some ground rules for this group session. Please speak clearly and loudly so that everyone in the group can hear you. Also, because everything you say is important, I ask that you speak one-at-a-time and avoid side conversations. I am taping our meeting because later, I have to write a report describing the important information I learned from the group. None of you will be identified by name in the report.

I would like for each of you to introduce yourselves by giving your first name, and a brief description of where you would be and what you would be doing if you weren't here right now.

Do any of you have questions before we start?

### **II. EXERCISES**

#### **Attitudes About Driving Short Distances [10 minutes]**

1. Where do you do most of your driving, close to home or on long trips?
2. Are there times or things that annoy you on (these) short trips?
3. What kinds of things annoy you?
4. Have there been times when you've been in situations that were dangerous while driving on short trips? Describe those situations?
5. What is your reaction to the statement that "most crashes occur close to home?" Is it believable?
6. Speaking of crashes, you may have heard the expression, "It only takes once." What does this mean to you? How do you get people to think this way even on short trips?

7. We know from our previous groups that people sometimes don't wear seat belts on short trips. What, if anything, could be done to convince them that seat belt use is a good idea on all trips, even short ones?

### **Attitudes About the Other Driver [10 minutes]**

1. What kinds of things do other drivers do that bother you?
2. What kinds of things do other drivers do that you consider dangerous to you?
3. Which of these behaviors are you likely to see when driving on short trips?
4. Do you look for certain things to tell you whether other drivers can be a problem, or even dangerous to you?
5. What kinds of things do you look for?
6. How believable is the idea that seat belts are an important weapon you have against the unpredictable actions of the other driver? How might you promote this idea?

### **Motivational Strategy #1 - Protecting Kids [10 minutes]**

1. Do you consider placing children in seat belts or car seats an important part of protecting kids? Why or why not?
2. Research shows that when a driver is not buckled, a child sitting in a vehicle is often not buckled. What is your reaction to this?
3. How persuasive an argument is this to convince adults to buckle-up all the time? How would you present this argument?
4. In situations where the adult makes certain a child is correctly restrained, but the adult does not buckle-up, what kind of message does this convey?
5. What is your reaction to the statement, "If you are not protecting yourself fully by buckling up, you are not offering the fullest protection to your child." - probe for reaction to the idea that an adult who is incapacitated because of a crash might not be able to respond to the needs (both immediate and long-term) of a child
6. How could this be best communicated?

**Motivational Strategy #2 - Cost Factors [5 minutes]**

1. Suppose you were told that everyone pays for those who don't buckle up in higher taxes, higher health care, and higher insurance costs. What would be your reaction to this?
2. How would this information have to be presented to make it relevant and believable to you?

**Motivational Strategy #3 - Employers as Influencers [5 minutes]**

1. Suppose your employer told you that non-use of belts raises insurance costs for businesses like themselves, and asks employees to **always** wear a seat belt because it is important? Is the cost statement believable to you? Why or why not?
2. Would this request from your employer have an impact on your behavior?
3. What would be the best way for the employer to present this request?
4. Would a poster at your place of work be a good reminder? If so, where should it be placed?
5. What else, if anything, would you suggest that your employer could do that would have an impact on belt use?

**Motivational Strategy #4 - Health Community as Influencers [5 minutes]**

1. What is your reaction to the idea of medical professionals communicating messages about the importance of always using seat belts?
2. How could they best communicate this information? probe for both medium and venues

**Motivational Strategy #5 - Incentives [5 minutes]**

1. We know that for most people, if community programs paid them to buckle up, they would. But of course, most communities can't afford to hand out a lot of money. What kind of incentive program to increase seat belt use would be meaningful to you, but affordable for your community? For example, what about the idea of a periodic community buckle up raffle?
2. [YOUNG GROUPS ONLY] What is your reaction to a voluntary program where your seat belt use would be technologically monitored and you could receive a stipend for school tuition/expenses?

## **Concept Testing [40 minutes]**

We are now going to present some ideas and concepts we have developed to encourage young people to always buckle-up. We will present these ideas one-at-a-time, and then ask you to share your thoughts and feelings about each.

**Concept #1 - Poster of Young Child Sitting in Car Seat - feature a frontal-view of a young child in a car seat with poster caption: You Buckled Me But Not Yourself - What am I Supposed to do Now?**

**Concept #2 - Storyboard of 7-8 Year Old Child Who Unbuckles Belt - feature a child who observes older sibling/parent is unbuckled, then unbuckles own seat belt, and is thrown forward in a crash**

**Concept #3 - Video Segment of Young Child's Parent Playing - feature child in fun activities with voice-over telling audience that this is a story with a happy ending because parent/older sibling wore a seat belt. Message is that you're not just wearing a belt for yourself, but for others you care about.**

**Concept #4 - Alternating Home Video and Crash Pictures - feature alternating true slice-of-life video segments and crash still-pictures of young driver killed nearby his/her home because of failure to wear seat belt**

**Concept #5 - Radio PSA about the Other Driver - feature the various things the "other driver" might do to cause a crash**

**Concept #6 - Poster Illustrating the Cost of Not Using Belts - feature the "hidden costs" associated with not wearing seat belts, for example, higher insurance premiums because of money paid by insurance companies for medical care for crash victims (e.g., average medical costs of \$9,000 with belt versus \$14,000 without). Maybe an image such as a seat belt wrapped around a large pile of money with caption: How Much is a Seat Belt Worth to You?**

**Concept #7 - Radio PSA about Things That Can Happen Close to Home - feature drivers who talk about the distance from home (e.g., "For me it was two miles"), and then tie together with statement that all of these people had something in common -- they were involved in serious crashes close to home.**

**Concept #8 - Poster with Law Enforcement Officer - feature law enforcement officer acknowledging that he/she hates to have to stop people for seat belt violations, but doesn't want to deal any more with crash carnage.**

**Concept #9 - Poster Showing Seat Belt as a Defensive Weapon - feature illustration showing that belts are a weapon you have against the other driver**

[Note: The concepts will be shown one-at-a-time. Respondents will be asked to write down brief responses to the first two questions before discussing the other questions]

What is the main point?  
How does this make you feel?  
What might you do as a result of seeing this?  
To what extent do you believe this?  
How relevant does this seem to you?  
How attention-getting is this?  
What is appealing to you? Unappealing?  
What is understandable? Not clear?

What are some other ways that "reality" can be used to drive home the importance of always wearing seat belts?

### **Slogan Testing [10 minutes]**

1. Many of you have probably heard the slogan, "Friends don't let friends drive drunk." What do you think about this slogan? What makes it effective or ineffective?
2. We have developed a number of slogans aimed at making young people more aware of the need to buckle-up on every trip, and we would like for you to share your thoughts and feelings about these.

You Never Know Who's On the Road

Put the Damn Belts On Already

Make Your Short Drive a Safe Drive

Buckle-Up or Eat Glass

Seat Belts - Because Its a Jungle Out There

Seat Belts - You Never Know When You'll Need Them

If You're A Full-Time Driver, Why Be a Part-Time User?

Seat Belts - When Don't You Wear Them?

Seat Belts - It Just Takes Once

There's Too Much to Lose

### **Other Ideas [10 minutes]**

1. What is your reaction to the idea of well-publicized community programs/efforts designed to promote seat belt use? If there was such a program, what would be important components?
2. [OLDER GROUPS ONLY] If a child was asked to involve a parent in a homework assignment or project on seat belt safety (e.g., the egg car experiment), would you be willing to participate?
3. [YOUNG GROUPS ONLY] What thoughts do you have about peer programs that would use crash victims or people with other relevant stories to talk about the importance of always wearing a seat belt?
4. Who would be a good national spokesperson who could remind young people to always buckle-up. How about a local spokesperson?
5. What is your reaction to the Princess Di crash with respect to seat belt use?
6. Have you seen news stories in the past couple of weeks about seat belt use?  
- probe for awareness of "Buckle-Up America" campaign

### **III. CLOSING [5 minutes]**

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me today. Before closing, do you have any additional comments that you would like to offer about the topics we discussed? (If not, conclude the session; if so, briefly allow further discussion). Please remember to pick-up your stipend for participating today/tonight. Again, thank you.



## APPENDIX C - RESPONDENT SCREENER

### Note to Recruiter:

- Respondents should be selected from metropolitan areas where average annual household income is \$15,000 to \$35,000.
- Race/ethnicity is not a screening variable.
- Recruit for a show of 8-10 participants for each group.

Hi, my name is ( ) and I'm calling about a study sponsored by the Department of Transportation. All persons selected for the study will be paid \$40.00 for participating in a 2-hour group session. During the group, you will be asked to share some of your thoughts and feelings about driving and passenger safety. The group will be scheduled on ( ) and will be held at ( ). Before I continue, are you interested in participating? (If yes, continue; if no, thank and terminate)

Now, I have to ask you several questions to determine if you are eligible to be part of the study.

1. What is your age/gender?

- ( ) under age 16; thank and terminate
- ( ) 16-20 male; consider for **Group 1**; continue
- ( ) 16-20 female; consider for **Group 2**; continue
- ( ) 25-34 male; consider for **Group 3**; continue to 1a.
- ( ) 25-34 female; consider for **Group 4**; continue to 1a.
- ( ) 35 and over; thank and terminate

1a. Do you have children?

- ( ) yes; include at least 6; continue
- ( ) no; continue

2. Have you driven during the past week?

- ( ) yes; continue
- ( ) no; thank and terminate

3. When you are driving, how often do you use a seat belt? (Provide the following choices) Is it all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or never?

- never; thank and terminate
- some of the time; no more than three per group, continue to Q.4
- most of the time; continue to Q.4
- all of the time; continue to Q.5

4. When was the last time you did not wear a seat belt?

- within the past day, continue to Q.6
- within the past week, continue to Q.6
- within the past month, continue to Q.6
- more than a month ago, thank and terminate

5. When was the last time you did not wear a seat belt?

- within the past day, continue to Q.6
- within the past week, continue to Q.6
- more than a week ago, thank and terminate

6. Have you participated in a research or focus group in the past year?

- no; continue
- yes; thank and terminate

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Assignment: \_\_\_\_\_