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DOT 116-85
Contact: Jennifer Hillings
Tel.: (202)426-4570
Contact: Judy Petty
Tel.: (202)426-9550

BARBARA MANDRELL MAKES DRAMATIC APPEAL FOR SAFETY BELT USE

Superstar entertainer Barbara Mandrell, who credits safety belts with saving her life in a head-on car crash last year, is taking her safety message to the American people in a dramatic public service announcement that will be filmed for television on Oct. 29 in Nashville, Tenn.

Although she seldom used safety belts before the September 1984 collision that left her seriously injured and hospitalized for weeks, Mandrell and her children buckled up just moments before an oncoming car swerved across the highway and hit them in a head-on collision. The driver of the other car, who was not wearing a safety belt, was killed.

"Among my first recollections in the hospital was that safety belts saved my life . . . and the lives of my children. I promised myself that others would benefit from my experience. Safety belts work and excuses for not wearing them could cost you your life," Mandrell said.

"Like so many people, I never gave safety belts much thought because I consider myself a cautious driver and never expected to be in a serious accident. I had plenty of excuses for not wearing them. But just before the crash, while stopped at a light, I saw some children in a station wagon with the tailgate down and I thought how dangerous it looked. It made me suggest that we all buckle up. A twist of fate saved our lives," she added.

Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth Hanford Dole said, "I can't imagine a more influential way for Americans to be encouraged to get into the safety belt habit than from sharing in Barbara Mandrell's personal, lifesaving experience. I am grateful to her for her enthusiastic, heartfelt appeal for safety belt use."

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According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), which is sponsoring Mandrell's 30-second television and radio announcements, as many as 10,000 additional lives could be saved each year if everyone used safety belts. Recent public opinion polls by the Harris and Roper organizations indicate a significant increase in the number of adults who say they use belts. Currently, 16 states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws requiring belt use. States with safety belt use laws report a decline in fatalities of approximately 20 percent.

In addition to the public service messages, which will be distributed during November to television and radio stations across the country, Mandrell also will serve as chairman of the Nov. 24-30 "All-American Buckle Up," a week of national emphasis on safety belts organized by DOT, state and local governments and private organizations. During the "All-American Buckle Up," motorists will be challenged to give safety belts a try for one week and to "Start a Habit for Life."

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**National Highway
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