



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

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The U.S. Department of Transportation Broadcast News Service for Thursday, November 29, has three actualities on safety belt usage laws. Each follow a lead in.

The National Safety Belt Usage Conference, taking place in Washington D.C. this week, has the objective of identifying key action areas for State passage, implementation and evaluation of mandatory safety belt use laws. At the conference Wednesday, Under Secretary of Transportation John Barnum, spoke on the constitutionality and goals of such laws.

UNDER SECRETARY BARNUM: "The preliminary prognosis is that the proposed mandatory safety belt laws will be upheld by state courts and federal courts alike. Of course, the importance of winning the legal test cannot be underestimated if we are to reap the benefits which the Department believes a nationwide program of such laws could bring: the savings of tens of thousands of lives a year, the mitigation of many times that number of injuries, and a monetary saving of up to two billion dollars a year."

Federal Highway Administrator Norbert Tiemann, noted the effectiveness of a safety belt use requirement for all persons driving motor vehicles used in interstate commerce enacted by the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety in 1971.

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ADMINISTRATOR TIEMANN: "Based on this information reported to the Bureau on accidents which occurred between January and July of 1973, drivers of commercial vehicles who are wearing safety belts are more than four times less likely to be fatally injured if involved in an accident than those who are not wearing safety belts.

"The success of our requirements for commercial vehicles tends to suggest to me that the same success found for mandatory safety belt usage laws for automobiles in other countries could be obtained by requiring use of seat belts in automobiles in this country."

Australia has shown a 20% reduction of deaths in automobile accidents since its states enacted safety belt usage laws. Gregory Taylor, Deputy Editor of the Melbourne Age, commented on public acceptance of the laws.

MR. TAYLOR: "The public has accepted (them) -- it's extraordinary. I was never a keen seat belt wearer before compulsion came around -- I should have been, but I wasn't -- but once I got into the habit of doing it because I had to do it, I feel undressed now if I don't wear a seat belt as soon as I get into a car. So I'm sure the same would happen here once it came in. There is a small fringe of people who won't wear them, but they're probably the same type of persons who'll speed on the roads, or go through red lights. You'll never stop that."

This has been the Transportation News Report.

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