May Crash Report Card

The Springfield Public Works Department’s May 2010 Crash Report Card shows there have been six fatal crashes (resulting in eight total fatalities) from January 1 through May 31 of this year compared to three in the same time period in 2009. The number of total crashes has decreased by 3 percent, while the number of injury crashes has increased 6 percent, respectively, compared to the same period last year.

June Safety Message

Seatbelts have been proven to be the best way to minimize risk of injury when in a crash. Of the 33,963 people who died in traffic crashes across the United States in 2009, it is estimated that safety belts could have prevented death in more than half of these incidents. During the first four months of this year in Springfield, at least four out of five fatal crashes involved an unsecured occupant riding in a motorized vehicle (excluding motorcycles). Overall, the safety belt usage rate in Missouri has been estimated to be around 75 percent, compared to 83 percent nationwide. Unfortunately, many people choose not to wear a seatbelt for reasons such as personal comfort. Yet the facts are clear:

- The impact felt when crashing at a speed of only 15 mph is comparable to that of a person running into a wall without slowing down.
- If the impact speed is doubled to 30 mph in a crash, the impact force quadruples, which is comparable to the impact of a person falling the equivalent of three stories.
- Statistics suggest that you’re 25 times more likely to die if you are ejected from your vehicle.
- Use a safety belt each time you ride in a vehicle. About 80 percent of all traffic fatalities occur within 25 miles of the home and under the speed of 40 mph.

Seat Belt Tips

For best protection the belt should be worn correctly. Both straps should fit snugly across your hip and shoulder, as those body parts can best take the transferred impact. If the belt is worn too loose, the body has more time to accelerate forward until the belt catches it. Further, the shoulder strap and lap belt work as a unit and therefore it is important to wear both.

Doctors advise pregnant women to continue wearing a car safety belt and not to disable the airbag. Studies have shown that unbelted mothers are more likely to have excessive injuries than belted ones. The lap belt needs to be placed across the hips and below the belly instead of across or on their belly. As the abdomen grows, the seat should be moved back accordingly. The mother’s breastbone should be at least 10 inches from the steering wheel or dashboard, while still allowing the driver to reach the pedals.

Children should always be secured in a seat designed for their age/weight group, and should sit in an upright position (except infants). A recent study in Europe has shown that a child lying in the back seat in a sleeping position, strapped down with only the lap belt, suffers crash injuries that are almost as deadly as those who are ejected from the car without seatbelt protection. The same is true for adult passengers who place their legs on the
dashboard. For more information on child safety, or to view a calendar of child car seat check-up events in Springfield, go to: www.safekidsspringfield.org.

For more information and other great resources, go to: www.savemolives.com or contract Mandy Taylor in the Springfield Public Works Traffic Engineering Division at (417) 864-1980.