



Saved By the Belt Award Program

PURPOSE:

Due to the dramatic number of fatalities and incapacitating injuries as a result of motor vehicle crashes and the misuse or non-use of seat belts and child safety seats, the **Saved by the Belt Award Program** was instituted. This program honors and recognizes individuals involved in crashes that were saved because they were wearing a seat belt or properly restrained in a child safety seat. It is hoped that communities around the state will promote seat belt and child safety seat use, by using positive reinforcement in the way of awarding “saved” individuals for their conscientious use of occupant restraints and in turn, encourage others to do the same.

PROCEDURE:

1. Local Occupant Protection Buckle Up Montana (BUMT) Coalitions, DUI Task Forces, Law Enforcement, First Responders, Emergency Hospital staff and others committed to this project may participate.
2. Coordination of efforts in nominating an eligible individual is crucial to the integrity of the program and should be overseen by a local Buckle Up Montana Coalition Coordinator where applicable.
 - a. Collaborate with local law enforcement to identify survivors of crashes that were using a seat belt or a child safety seat, as being eligible for approval by the investigating officer of the crash. This collaboration is crucial to avoid rewarding individuals in crashes where alcohol involvement, reckless driving, or vehicular assault/homicide violations were cited. *However, concerning other citations, it is important to keep in mind that the purpose of this program is to reward people for wearing their seat belt, not for being perfect drivers.*
 - b. Collaborate with first responders and local hospital(s) in the area to notify the BUMT coalition coordinator if a patient arrives at the hospital that meets the criteria of the program. The nominator can then forward the name to local law enforcement agencies and the investigating officer of the crash can determine if the individual should be nominated for the award.
3. Once the investigating officer determines an individual is eligible, the Saved by the Belt Award nomination form should be completed by the investigating officer and either mailed, faxed or emailed to:

Jennifer Wilson
MDT – Planning Division
2960 Prospect Avenue
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Phone: 406-444-0809
Fax: 406-449-9409
Email: jewilson@mt.gov

4. The awards should be presented at such venues as press conferences, luncheons, breakfast programs, school events, etc. Ideally, invitees would be the investigating officer, local family members, VIPs and

traffic safety partners such as Buckle Up Montana Coalition members, and representatives from Opportunity Bank of Montana and Town Pump.

For press conferences, lunch or breakfast programs, the following are suggestions for organizing the program:

- a. Invite the survivors and ask each individual if they would like to speak at the program to share their experience and how the crash impacted their lives.
 - b. Invite public officials in the community to attend the program. Judges, commissioners, insurance agency representatives, law enforcement, community organizations, business leaders, hospital personnel, prehospital personnel, fire officials. Most importantly, make sure news media for television, newspaper and radio attend. They will help you get the local story out to the community, thereby raising public awareness about the importance of wearing seatbelts and using child safety seats. Select this link for a directory of Montana's newspapers.
<http://www.mtnewspapers.com/membership-directory-list-contacts-web-addresses/>
 - c. Choose several individuals to speak about the importance of seatbelt use. It is helpful if these individuals are dynamic and articulate so that their message is well received by the audience.
 - d. Keep the program interesting and relatively short.
5. Have the Saved by the Belt recipient(s) sign a Consent Waiver and Photo Release so MDT can share their stories.

By coordinating the efforts of collaborating organizations, the **Saved by the Belt Award Program** is becoming a well-recognized event throughout Montana. It is anticipated that this increased public awareness will have the effect of influencing more people to properly use seat belts and child safety seats, resulting in a decrease in traffic crash injuries and fatalities.

Thank you for participating!



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