

## ***Native Americans Less Likely to Use Seat Belts***

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A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study finds that safety belt use on Native American tribal reservations ranges from a low of 8.8 percent to a high of 84.8 percent. The national average for safety belt use is 82 percent.

Motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of death for Native Americans throughout the continental United States.

Low safety belt use rates on tribal reservations are a key contributor, with 76 percent of fatally injured occupants not buckled up at the time of the crash.

"Safety belts are one of the most effective and valuable safety devices available in cars today", said Jacqueline Glassman, Deputy Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "We must find a way to help Native American leaders bridge large gaps in safety belt use and, ultimately, save lives".

The NHTSA's study found that reservations with tribal law and traffic law enforcement have a collective seatbelt use rate of 55.4 percent. Tribal reservations with primary safety belt laws had a 68 percent use rate.

By comparison, tribal reservations that had secondary belt laws averaged 53.2 percent belt use. For reservations with no belt use laws of any kind, an average of 26.4 percent of the vehicle occupants were belted. The lowest belt use rate on sampled reservations was 8.8 percent.

The NHTSA study also found safety belt use rates were higher for cars, SUVs and vans, but lower for pickup trucks.

Males were less likely to use safety belts at 52.3 percent, compared to 60.3 percent for females.