



Sample Letter to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are often printed by community newspapers about local issues and events such as *Click It or Ticket*. Because the Letters-to-the-Editor section is widely read, it's a good place to communicate your message. Get a number of people to send this or a similar letter to all your local newspapers, including weekly papers. Such solidarity will not only aid in the *Click It or Ticket* effort, but will also demonstrate how important this issue is to community advocates, and encourage the editor to print the letter and potentially write other stories about safety belts and traffic safety.

The **following is a sample Letter to the Editor**. Feel free to use the sample as it is or to incorporate more specific statistics or information about events or activities that you know of taking place in your community during the May 2004 *Click It or Ticket* Mobilization.

When sending your letter, type it on business or personal letterhead which includes your name, address, and phone number, so the editor can contact you if he or she has questions.

Check the editorial page of each newspaper for the address to send Letters to the Editor. If it is not listed, call the paper, check online or just send the letter to the newspaper's main address with Attn. Letter to the Editor written on the first line.

[insert date]

Letters to the Editor
[insert newspaper name]

To the Editor:

Many people – especially teen-agers and young adults – still don't take one of the simplest and most effective steps to stay safe: Buckling up. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 59 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2002 – 32,598 men, women and children – weren't wearing safety belts.

Teenagers and young adults are particularly at risk. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens and young adults in the United States from age 16 through 34, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Yet, 64 percent of 16- to 20-year-old (and 68 percent of 18- to 34-year old) passenger vehicle occupants killed or seriously injured in crashes in 2002 were not wearing a safety belt, according to NHTSA.

Sometimes the fear of getting a traffic ticket is the only reason that someone will wear a safety belt. That's why State and local law enforcement officers across the country are joining the national *Click It or Ticket/Operation ABC* (America Buckles Up Children) *May 2004 Mobilization* that runs from May 24 through June 6, 2004. Officers will aggressively ticket unbelted drivers and passengers. High-visibility enforcement has proven effective in increasing safety belt use.

A similar *Mobilization* held this past year in May 2003 helped convert an unprecedented 17 percent of safety belt non-users into users, increasing the national belt use rate to 79 percent from 75 percent the year before. The combination of active law enforcement, high-profile publicity, and the advocacy and promotion by public and private groups continues to be an extremely effective means for increasing safety belt use – and saving lives – across the country.

Bottom line – law enforcement officers would rather write someone a ticket than find that same person dead or critically injured because he or she wasn't restrained in a crash.

Wear your safety belt every trip, every time – and encourage teen-agers and young adults to do the same. Or risk getting a ticket — especially May 24 - June 6, 2004.

Sincerely,

[name]

[job title and place of work – or, if you're a student, insert your school and grade]

[city]