


**THE FINNISTERS**  
 A Labor Day Special  
 9:00 - 1:00  
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Ron Thompson  
 and The Resistors  
 Wednesday - Saturday  
 from San Francisco



# Seat belts reduce injuries

By Michael Hooper  
 Senior Reporter

Obedying the seat-belt law may be saving some Nebraskans from traffic injuries, according to statistics from the Nebraska Motor Vehicles Department of Highway Safety.

The number of injuries to car passengers between January and June of this year was the lowest it's been since 1972. Nebraska's mandatory seat belt law went into effect Sept. 6, 1985.

While 8,527 car passengers were injured during the six-month period last year, 7,872 were injured this year, despite a 1.04 percent increase in vehicle miles driven.

"If you increase miles driven, it's logical to predict that accidents and injuries would increase," said Fred Zwonechek, administrator of the Department of Highway Safety. "But that didn't happen."

"The only thing we can possibly attribute that (decrease in injuries) to is the increased use of seatbelts," Zwonechek said.

Last year 11 percent of drivers and front-seat passengers wore their seat belts, Zwonechek said. This year, according to department surveys, between 37 and 46 percent wore their seat belts.

Zwonechek said surveys were taken by department workers who stood on specific rural and urban roads, and wrote down the numbers of those wearing belts and of those who didn't.

Between 1980 and 1985 the number of injuries between January and June stayed around 8,550. The number of fatalities fluctuated during the same time period. While the number of those who died in car crashes went from 140 in 1980 down to 86 in 1983, the number rose to 123 this year. Last year 93 died in car accidents.

"People expected a reduction in fatalities," Zwonechek said, "which didn't occur." He explained that a majority of those drivers and passengers involved in fatal accidents are least likely to wear seat belts, based on their prior driving records of accidents and violations.

"Of all drivers, they ought to be wearing them because they're high risk," Zwonechek said. He said 40 percent of all fatalities involved alcohol.


There were 335 fewer accidents this year compared to last.



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Jill Stalnaker eats her ice cream while socializing with other students and faculty at the Ice Cream Social held at the East Campus Union. The social was sponsored by the Agriculture Advisory Board and Faculty Advisory Council.

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