

Seat belt enforcement campaign begins Monday

(KNZA)--Law enforcement agencies across Kansas will be taking a no-excuses approach to saving lives around the upcoming Memorial Day weekend.

According to a news release from the Kansas Department of Transportation, tickets will be issued to unbuckled occupants as a harsh reminder of the importance of seatbelt use at all times.

The release says more than 50 percent of traffic fatalities in Kansas in 2017 were unrestrained. Many of these individuals could have survived the car crash if they had only worn their seat belt. That's why law enforcement across the state is stepping up enforcement with the Click It. Or Ticket campaign that runs May 20 through June 2.

Locally, the Hiawatha and Horton Police Departments along with Kansas Highway Patrol are among law enforcement agencies taking part.

"The Click it. Or ticket. campaign isn't about issuing citations, it's about saving lives," said Technical Trooper Ben Gardner, of the Kansas Highway Patrol. "Too many people die in motor vehicle crashes who could have survived if they had only buckled up."

It is prohibited to drive or ride as a passenger in a motor vehicle without wearing a seat belt for a good reason.

In 2017, 53 percent of the 316 deaths from automobile crashes in Kansas were not buckled. The release says pick-up truck drivers, young adults and males are among some of the worst offenders and most at-risk.

In 2018, the Kansas observed seat belt usage was 84 percent, below the national average of 90 percent, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.