

PRESS RELEASE

During the week of March 22-28, all of the law enforcement agencies in Cowley County are partnering with law enforcement agencies in nine other Southeast Kansas counties to emphasize enforcement of Kansas seat belt and child passenger safety laws. This joint effort of the Arkansas City Police Department, Winfield Police Department, Burden Police Department, Udall Police Department and Cowley County Sheriff's Office utilizes a special federal grant and is designed to promote a higher level of seat belt usage and compliance with seat belt laws in the rural areas of the state. Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) officials have noted that seat belt and child passenger safety seat usage rates in the Southeastern part of the state are well below the overall state usage rate. The other counties included in this campaign are Allen, Bourbon, Cherokee, Crawford, Labette, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson and Woodson.

According to KDOT, their observational surveys have established that when the driver of a vehicle sets the example of wearing a seat belt, about 92 percent of the children or young people in the vehicle are observed to also be properly belted or otherwise restrained. Law enforcement officers recognize that their challenge is to get the attention of our children, our teens and especially our adults who influence Kansas youth to assure that everyone in the vehicle is properly belted or in an appropriate child safety seat...before a tragedy occurs. Thus, as part of this safety program all Cowley County law enforcement officers will be aggressively enforcing seat belt and child passenger safety laws.

The rural seat belt enforcement campaign is a life-saving effort of KDOT's Traffic Safety Section which is being conducted in cooperation with state and local law enforcement agencies.