

MONTANA MOTOR CARRIERS ASSOCIATION

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Good stuff.



EXHIBIT ⁵
DATE 3/11/05
SB 43



DRIVING TRUCKING'S SUCCESS

Testimony SB 43

Madam Chair, members of the House Judiciary Committee, for the record I am Spook Stang Executive Vice President of the Montana Motor Carriers Association. The MMCA and its 800 members statewide would like to go on record in support of SB. 43

The Mission statement of the MMCA is: As responsible citizens we promote and represent safe professional and profitable Commercial Transportation interests with one voice. Because of MMCA's commitment to safety it was decided that the number one priority of the MMCA this legislative session would be to promote and work for the passage of a primary seat belt law in Montana.

The MMCA membership is committed to seeing that seat belt usage in Montana is a top priority. We were so committed that we invested \$10,000 of MMCA money into a media campaign last fall to educate Montanan's on the need for a primary seat belt law. We joined other groups in developing and promoting a web site committed to the education of Montanans. Most of the facts that are presented here today come from the website seatbeltmontana.com.

70% of Montana Fatalities not wearing a Safety Belt -- In 2003, almost 7 out of every 10-vehicle occupants who died in Montana were not wearing safety belts. And remember, even if you're a good driver, wearing your safety belt is your best defense against drunk, drowsy, and aggressive drivers.

After A Primary Law Passes..... -- During the first full year after enforcement of belt laws, fatality rates dropped 21 percent in five primary states compared to only 7 percent in 11 secondary law states. During the same period there was a 24 percent reduction in fatality rates for persons under 21 years old in the primary states compared to a 3 percent reduction for that age group in the secondary law states.

Saving Children's Lives Saves Parent's Lives -- Primary safety belt laws also help save the lives of children. Citizens are much more likely to buckle up and place their children in child safety seats when there is the possibility of receiving a citation for not doing so. NHTSA and State surveys have repeatedly and consistently shown that adult safety belt use is a strong predictor of whether children are appropriately restrained. However, in 2000, one out of every three children 5 to 15 years of age was unrestrained and traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among children in this age group.

A Primary Law Bumps Up Safety Belt Usage According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 228 people lost their lives in light vehicle crashes in Montana in 2003. About half of these lives could have been saved with safety belts. Nearly 70% of fatally injured passengers in Montana were known to be unrestrained.

On average states that upgrade from a Secondary Enforcement to a Primary Enforcement enjoy a use rate gain of 11%.

- In Montana that would mean an additional 25 lives would be saved each year
- 183 serious nonfatal injuries would be prevented each year
- \$44 MILLION in economic savings would be realized annually.

Montanans pay \$621 million in medical expenses, lost productivity, property damage, and related costs due to traffic accidents each year. That is \$688 for every resident (\$2752 for a family of four) in Montana each year. Roughly, 74% of that cost is paid by the citizens of Montana not involved in the crashes. Additionally crashes cost employers more than \$119 million in the State, or about \$290 per employee.

While the MMCA's prime objective to the passage of a primary seat belt law is safety, it should be noted that the economic costs to Montanans is becoming a burden. Studies have shown that the average workdays lost by an unbelted passenger are 90 days, while the average time lost by a belted passenger is around 14 days.

I have attached to my testimony the results of a study done in Yellowstone County. These facts bring the cost to society in Yellowstone County alone of non-use of seat belts. The study showed that unbelted occupants were 25 times more likely to die in a crash than unbelted passengers. Unbelted crash occupants accounted for 67% of the total inpatient hospital charges. These numbers clearly have a huge economic impact on insurance rates in Yellowstone County.

Last but not least you may ask why does the trucking industry care. No matter how much safety we practice we can only affect 30% of the truck car collisions as the passenger car cause 70% of these accidents. We understand that accidents will occur and we want to make sure that injuries and fatalities are kept as low as possible so that we can continue to provide health insurance and other benefits to our employees.

In closing I listened to Rep. Lang's testimony on his DUI bills earlier this week. He talked about making the tough decisions up here that many times your constituents don't understand and how you have to make them. We have heard a lot of testimony this session about the 20% of Montanans who don't have health insurance, the 20% of drivers who have no insurance on their cars and the 20% of people who do not wear their safety belts. These may be the same people believe that it is their right not to wear a seatbelt. These are the same people who are severely injured in vehicle accidents. The other 80% of us pay their medical expenses through increased medical costs, taxes and insurance. The 80% of us who carry adequate insurance and exercise our right to wear our belts say if it is their right not to wear their belts than it should be our right to refuse to pay these additional costs to keep them healthy.

Please support SB 43

2003 CRASH FACTS

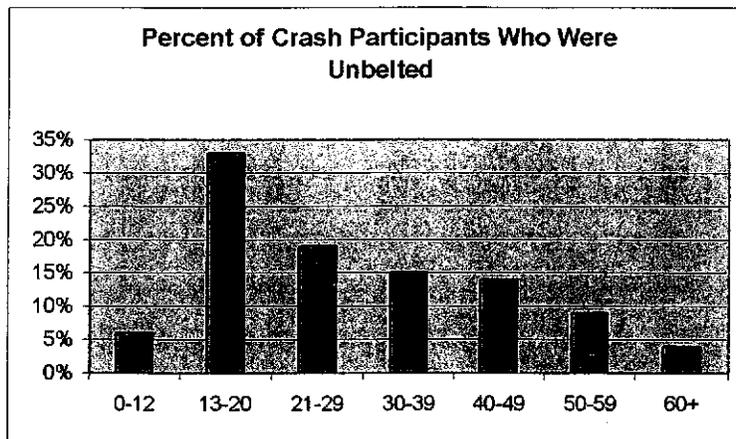
Yellowstone County CODES Project

Failure to "buckle up" contributes to more fatalities than any other traffic safety related behavior

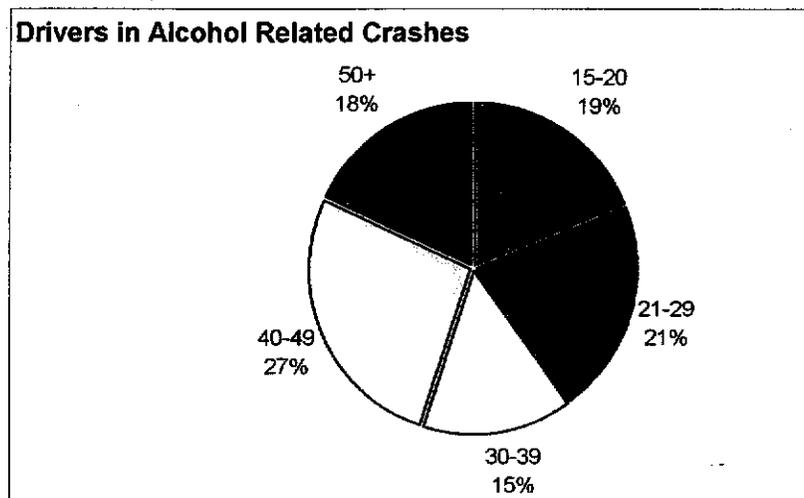
Compared to belted crash occupants, unbelted crash occupants were 25 times more likely to die in a crash.

Unbelted crash occupants in Yellowstone County were 7.3 times more likely to require inpatient hospitalization and 2 times more likely to require emergency department care than those who were belted.

The average charge for a **belted** inpatient was \$20,709. The average charge for an **unbelted** inpatient was \$48,692.



Unbelted occupants accounted for 67% of the total inpatient hospital charges for persons involved in crashes.



76% of crash participants involved in Alcohol Related crashes were not wearing a seatbelt. Crash participants involved in Alcohol Related crashes accounted for 33% of total hospital charges.