Exhibit No. 12
Date 1-19-05
Bill No. SB43

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 43
Before Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 303

January 19, 2005

Clint Hays
Director Truckload Operations
Watkins & Shepard Trucking
6400 N. Highway 10 West
Missoula, Montana 59806

Thank you Mr. Chairman. My name is Clint Hays. I am the Director of Truckload Operations for Watkins & Shepard Trucking which is headquartered in Missoula, MT. We operate about 700 trucks and in 2004 employed over 350 Montana residents with a payroll over $13.3 million. I am here testifying in support of Senate Bill 43 and urge the Committee to pass the bill through to the full Senate.

Watkins & Shepard Trucking places safety first in everything we do. However, we were involved in two accidents with automobiles in the past 12 months where the drivers of both cars were wearing their seat belts. In both accidents the cars rolled over several times and in both cases the drivers were treated and released. The outcome from these accidents would have been significantly different had they not worn their seat belts. Statistically, a trucking company can expect to have one fatality every 30 million miles. Watkins & Shepard runs over 60 million miles a year and should have experienced 2 fatalities in the past 12 months. We would have been part of this statistic had those two individuals not worn their seat belts.

This not only a safety issue but a cost issue. One of the most common complaints we hear from our employees is the ever rising cost of health insurance. In a recent Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center Study, they noted that more than 6.3 million adults were involved in police-reported motor vehicle crashes in 2001, resulting in more than 3 million injuries and health-care visits. Montana's own Yellowstone County report on 2003 crashes noted that the average charge for a belted inpatient was $20,709 while the average for an unbelted inpatient was $48,692. Rising health care costs have closed the doors of many businesses and will continue to do so if we do not act now to change this trend.

Businesses and individuals are further affected by the lack of seat belt use other than just hospital bills. Unrestrained occupants lost an average of 96 work days while occupants who were properly protected lost an average of 10 work days. Both companies and individuals loose when employees miss work. The Harborview study also showed that injured motor vehicle occupants cumulatively lost 60.8 million days of work, resulting in direct annual productivity losses of more than $7.5 billion. $5.6 billion resulted from injuries to motor vehicle occupants who were not wearing their seat belts.

States that have already adopted a primary seat belt law have lower fatality and incidents of serious injury than those states without. Montana businesses and citizens pay for the loss of life and costs associated with those who do not wear seat belts. It is imperative that Montana act to save lives and the prosperity of those that enjoy driving its highways. This bill can save lives and money for everyone in Montana.

Thank you for your time and consideration for this critical bill. I respectfully urge the Committee to approve this bill and move this bill on to the full Senate.

Sincerely,

Clinton S. Hays

2003 CRASH FACTS

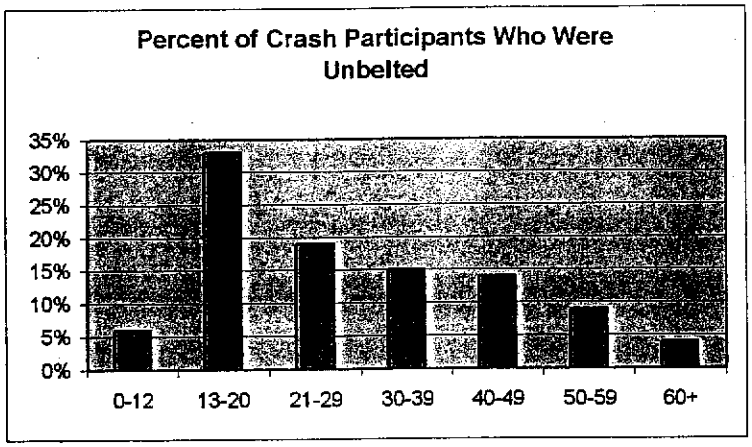
Yellowstone County CODES Project

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

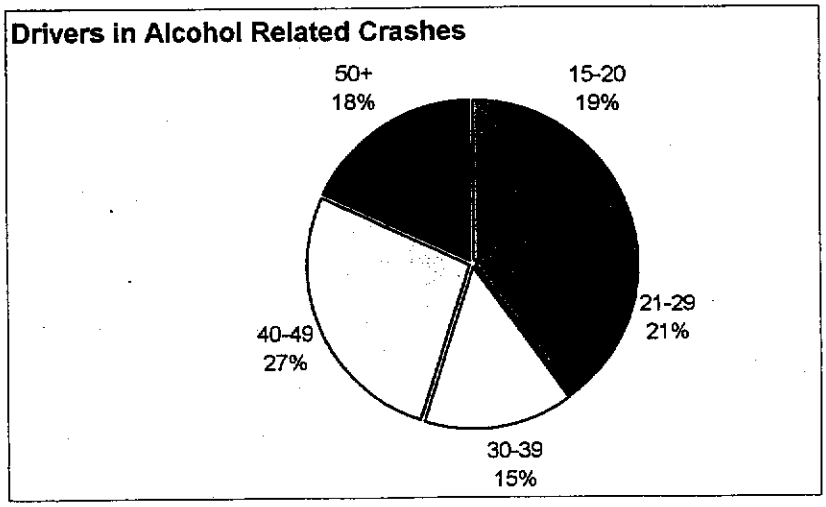
Compared to belted crash occupants, unbelted crash occupants were 25 times more likely to die in a crash.

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.

Yellowstone County CODES Project
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