

INDIANA

Marion County Traffic Safety Partnership Nighttime Safety Belt Enforcement Zones

▶ AT-A-GLANCE

▶ **Project Characteristics**
Collaborative

▶ **Program Areas**
Occupant Protection
Police Traffic Services

▶ **Targeted Populations**
Marion County Motorists

▶ **Type of Jurisdiction**
Multi-Jurisdictional

▶ **Jurisdiction Size**
860,000

▶ **Funding**
154 Funds: \$120,000
410 Funds: \$65,000

▶ **Contact**
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Problem Identification

Each year, Marion County, Indiana, reports more than 35,000 motor vehicle crashes. In June 2000, the average safety belt use rate for cars was 67 percent with a 62 percent overall rate. The Center for the Advancement of Transportation Safety at Purdue University reported that, in 2002, 52.6 percent of vehicle occupants involved in fatal crashes after dark were unrestrained. They also reported that unrestrained drivers after dark accounted for 74.3 percent of vehicle occupant fatalities. Since so many crashes involving serious injury occur at night, Marion County recognized the need to address the nighttime, high-risk driver.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the *Marion County Traffic Safety Partnership Nighttime Safety Belt Enforcement Zones* project is to reduce injuries and fatalities in crashes occurring at night by using nighttime safety belt enforcement zones to increase safety belt compliance.

Strategies and Activities

The *Marion County Traffic Safety Partnership Nighttime Safety Belt Enforcement Zones* project used the following strategies and activities to achieve its goal:

- Create a partnership among area police and sheriff's departments to reduce motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and save lives.
- Develop a zero tolerance safety belt enforcement policy.
- Require Zone Supervisors to address safety issues at each zone roll call.
- Set up enforcement zones in well lit locations for officer and public safety.
- Set up enforcement zones in high crash and low belt use areas.
- Conduct enforcement zones for approximately a three hour period.
- Do not run nighttime enforcement zones if the streets are wet or slick.
- Organize roving patrols if the selected zone is not safe.
- Place safety zone signs about 200 feet from the intersection.
- Post signs in areas that allow motorists approaching a zone location to see message boards or portable signs set up to notify them that they are entering a Safety Belt Enforcement Zone.
- Place a police car with red lights on in the curb lane and behind the

zone signs.

- Position officers in the median or in the roadway close to automatic signals or stop signs.
- Station a "spotting" officer by the zone sign to warn officers of an approaching violator (Require the spotting officer to appear in court).
- Use assigned radio channels to communicate during zones.
- Require that officers wear reflective vests and use flashlights with red cones for traffic control.
- Stop violators only when they slow down for a yellow/red light or a stop sign and safely direct the suspected motorists out of traffic.
- Divert, for enforcement action, only vehicles in which officers observe a safety belt or child restraint violation.
- Use the curb lane as a "dead" lane for vehicle pull off and officer safety (Use an off-street pull off if available).
- Keep general traffic flowing smoothly.
- Assist motorists returning to traffic flow.
- Take enforcement action when observing another crime or violation.
- Request consent to search drivers ONLY if there is probable cause.
- Request assist from Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) task force if officer observes a suspected DWI offender in the zone.

Results

The *Marion County Traffic Safety Partnership Nighttime Safety Belt Enforcement Zones* initiated its first nighttime safety belt enforcement zone in the Indianapolis downtown area on April 10, 2004 from 11:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. with the following results:

- Issued forty safety belt citations during a three-hour enforcement zone
- Made three arrests and issued one other citation
- Enabled seven multi-agency officers to participate
- Developed a procedure for future nighttime safety belt zones

Officers working that night felt that the zone was both productive and conducted safely. The officers had no problem visually identifying unbelted motorists as they approached and passed the highly visible safety belt enforcement zone signs.

Since the Safety Belt Enforcement Zone's inception, the safety belt use rate has steadily risen. Marion County currently has a 90 percent use rate in cars. The rate in trucks remains in the 40 percent range, since there is no safety belt use law for those vehicles. Marion County's average safety belt use rate rose from 60 percent into the upper 80 percent range.