

Recent legislation was signed by Governor Quinn that requires seat restraints for all passengers, including those in the rear seats. Seat belts save lives. By now, there are plenty of statistics to back up that statement. Prior law in Illinois provided that each driver and front seat passenger must wear a safety belt. In addition, the law requires proper restraint for passengers under 8 years of age and all passengers riding with a driver who is under 18 years of age.

If a car accident occurs, the seat belts cannot help protect if they aren't in use. Changing driving (and riding) habits can be difficult. But do laws requiring seat belt use increase usage? Well, the first law in Illinois to require the use of seat restraints was passed in 1988. In 2000, the campaign known as Click It or Ticket began. This is an enforcement effort by state and local officers to check for seat belt use and write tickets for those not complying with the law. Front seat belt usage that year was 70.5%. Ten years later, in 2010, seat belt usage by those in the front seat was at 92.6%, a 22% increase! Estimates are that over 4,000 lives were saved due to this increased usage. So it appears that with appropriate laws in place and a strong enforcement campaign, habits of drivers and passengers can be changed.

Manufacturers are required to provide safety restraints for all passenger positions in a vehicle. This legislation should help increase usage of those restraints and hopefully translate into fewer deaths and injuries from auto accidents.

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