Local Problem: Nighttime Seat Belt Usage

Problem Identification

Seat belt usage is a problem that all agencies across the country deal with. We know that over the past four years, the national average for drivers who were not belted that are killed in a crash is between 45 and 47 percent. In Henrico, the unbelted rate for fatalities in 2015 was 35 percent. Virginia is a state where occupant protection is a secondary offense, but it also has laws where it is primary for children.

Henrico is a partner in the Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan. This plan outlines statistics, based on prior year data, that shows the dangers of not wearing seat belt. The ultimate goal is 100 percent compliance, but that is an unrealistic goal. As a law enforcement agency, it is our job along with other entities to get that percentage as high as possible.

Each year, our Traffic Enforcement Unit conducts multiple seat belt pre-enforcement and post enforcement surveys. Both surveys are based on 100 vehicles that pass through an intersection at a given place and time. About a week or so after the enforcement blitz, a post survey is completed to see if our HVE (High Visibility Enforcement) has been effective. These surveys are completed every year, and we usually see an increase in seat belt usage - post enforcement.

In 2014, our seat belt usage rate was right at 80 percent, and in 2015, it increased only slightly - up to 81 percent during the daytime. We are excited that our numbers are this high because Virginia is a secondary enforcement state as it relates to seat belt enforcement. Our state compliance rate was 77.3 percent for 2014 and was 80.9 percent for 2015. **Our nighttime percentage rate was much lower - with compliance percentage numbers in the 60s. Therefore, we decided to focus our efforts to increasing nighttime seat belt usage rate and to reducing crashes involving unrestrained drivers.**

Operation Nighthawk

In 2015, a large-scale study was completed that involved federal, state, and local jurisdictions, which studied seat belt usage problems during both day and night. This study was a collection of four years of data starting in 2012 and ending in 2015. NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) selected Virginia as a pilot program to study nighttime enforcement efforts to increase seat belt usage. The goal was to see whether or not this study would be effective in changing driver behavior. If so, to then develop high visibility enforcement and paid media placement that could be used collaboratively by law enforcement agencies across the state to support existing efforts. Clearly, the purpose was also to increase belt usage to a level higher than in previous years and to see if this related to a reduction in unbelted crashes.

This study combined the following agencies or entities:

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles Highway Safety Office
- Old Dominion University
- Henrico County Police Division
- Chesapeake City Police Department
- Collier and Associates Media Buyer

There were two law enforcement agencies that participated in this program, and they were Chesapeake Police and Henrico County Police. The first two years during which data was collected included paid media blitzes along with specific enforcement in Chesapeake while Henrico conducted its normal routine. Data was also collected during the same timeframe in Henrico County at six intersections where Henrico County demographics differed. Later, the roles were switched so that in 2014 and 2015, Henrico County got the paid media blitz along with the extra patrols. The results of the study will be discussed later in both the enforcement and outcome sections.

Other Reviews

A quarterly review is completed by the traffic unit on crashes and all factors are considered. This quarterly analysis helps us determine where our traffic specials

should be focused. We have found that our campaigns tend to be very successful but the general population always returns to its norm once the message is no longer being delivered heavily. This was also a trend that will be discussed more in the outcome section from 'Operation Nighthawk'.

Another side note that came out of all of these studies, our department had to look at itself in the mirror to see if our officers were also in compliance. It was found that in 2015, there were several crashes that occurred where officers were not wearing their seat belts. This caused our Chief of Police to reinforce the usage of seat belts by sending out a message to the officers as well as changing a policy and our take home car program. There were only nine related police vehicle crashes where the officer was not wearing the seat belt out of 131 total crashes. None of this involved any type of situation that may have led the officer to be in danger from a call for service so therefore, they should have been wearing the belt. This prompted our Chief to make some changes as you will see in our policy section.

Policy

G-85-11 Rev. (Traffic Enforcement) is our policy governing how we handle traffic related incidents. Below is an excerpt, which is our governing statement for Traffic Enforcement:

> *Traffic enforcement is an important tool that can be utilized to enforce traffic laws and gather information concerning criminal activity.* ***Seat belt and child restraint enforcement****, speeding, and identifying impaired drivers are a top priority. Officers are encouraged to conduct various enforcement activities to address these issues. Enforcement action should be taken upon detection of a violation of law or a potentially hazardous act and shall be taken in a uniform and consistent manner. Any information from these enforcement activities can be utilized by Homeland Security, Patrol, CASE, or any Division component to increase traffic safety and further the suppression of criminal activities.*

Policy 273.00 Traffic Functions

Traffic law enforcement is an important aspect of the Division's mission. It is a responsibility shared by all enforcement personnel, particularly the uniformed officer. Enforcement activities shall be performed at a level that will maximize the safe flow of traffic and voluntary compliance with all traffic laws.

G-15-16 I.E. (Program Administration) Use of Seat Belts in Division Vehicles

> *1. All persons riding in Police Division vehicles shall wear their seat belt at all times while the vehicle is in motion, unless there is an articulable satisfactory reason for not wearing the seat belt (i.e. arriving on a hot call or officer safety situation).*
> *2. Failure to wear the seat belt may result in removal from the take-home or assigned vehicle program.*
> *3. Division members removed from the program for failing to wear a seat belt will be required to reapply by written request to the Chief of Police.*

Policy 282.10 Use of Seat Belts

> *The unpredictability of the driving situations faced by an officer requires that all precautionary measures be utilized. All persons riding in police vehicles shall utilize their seat belt.*

The long letter that Chief Middleton wrote to the entire Division is in our attached policy guide for this chapter. However, here is an excerpt from it to show how serious he takes officers not wearing their seat belts:

> *"I wanted to take a moment to discuss a nationwide epidemic that I would like to get your help with. This is the use of or lack thereof of seat belts by officers. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reviewed over 700 police vehicle fatalities and found that 42 percent of the time officers were not wearing their seat belts. In a comprehensive study currently underway found that 50% of the officers surveyed stated that they do not wear seat belts while operating a police vehicle. The seat belt is just as important as your ballistic vest, your handgun, or any tool on your belt. You have to use it for it to be effective. It is there to save lives and reduce injuries during an automobile crash."*

Planning

Operation Nighthawk

The "formula" used for the study included using NHTSA's guide, *Countermeasures That Work* and combining high visibility enforcement with paid advertising proved to change driver behavior. In addition to the two, regularly scheduled, national campaigns in May and November, this study also compared the March and July campaigns to see if the numbers corresponded to those from the other months where this formula was used.

Chesapeake City was the first target area in 2012 and 2013 for the enforcement and paid media study, while Henrico County was the delayed control, meaning there was no additional enforcement emphasis beyond normal activities. Later, during 2014 and 2015, the two localities switched tactics used in the study, where Henrico used the formula of increased enforcement efforts and the paid media blitz.

The method enlisted by the researchers from Old Dominion University was no different from what our traffic unit usually does throughout the year. For instance, trained observers conducted the data collection. **Daytime observations were conducted by single collectors while nighttime observations were conducted by two collectors. Using two data collectors at night provided data cross-verification and addressed nighttime safety concerns**. The data was only collected during clear weather so that the data collectors' observations were unobstructed. Each observation period was 90 minutes long, and there were pre-determined intersections where safety and lighting factors were considered as were diverse demographics within the localities.

Qualifying vehicles were those that were no heavier than 10,000 pounds, so the observer, while standing on the ground, could more easily see vehicle occupants. Passenger cars, SUVs, mini-vans, and pickup trucks were the vehicles observed. Motorcycles were excluded. The seat belt had to be worn properly across the chest and collar-bone area, or it was counted as not being worn. Both the driver and front seat passenger were included in the observation. However, the data collected for this study only focused on the driver.

Over the four year study, there were 32 operational periods observed simultaneously in both jurisdictions. These studies were broken down into a 70/30 split with 70 percent of the operational period observed during daylight hours and the remainder (30 percent) observed at night. The ratio of men to women drivers during this study was about 60/40 with men being the larger group at 60 percent. Passenger cars were the vehicles most frequently recorded at approximately 52 percent of the total sample.

Once the focus areas were determined, both DMV grant money and agency paid regular time were used to handle the enforcement. **Our efforts focused on both day and night operations. Efforts varied with both high visibility patrols and group related specials such as enforcing traffic signal violations at an intersection while simultaneously concentrating on seat belt usage as well. The focus areas included six intersections located throughout the county in our South, Central and West Station areas.** Operations were set up to run red light specials and saturation patrols in these areas during the targeted day and night hours. (The enforcement aspect will be discussed later in the Enforcement section of this submission.) **Later, we followed-up by examining post surveys as well as statistical data from tickets we issued and examining information regarding crash related incidents during this time in these areas.**

The entire program and study was sponsored by NHTSA, Virginia DMV, Old Dominion University, and Henrico Police directly correlated with the Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

Police Officer Issue

In addition to the civilian issue in this study, we looked at police vehicle collisions where police officers were not wearing their seat belts. Henrico's Chief of Police mandated that we investigate how many police vehicle crashes there were with unrestrained officers and how we could improve that number. We believed we could

develop a plan that could link the Division's take-home police vehicle agreement policy with the Division's seat belt usage policy. We began developing the revised combined policy during the summer of 2015 and ended in December 2015, when Chief Middleton released a statement announcing the new take home vehicle agreement that must be re-signed by everyone in the Division. This was distributed to all sworn and civilian personnel and was included as part of the actual policy. This ensured that all Division employees needed to review, acknowledge and agree to this new policy.

Training

The occupant protection and enforcement training we conducted was for specific officers, such as those who are certified technicians who install child safety seats, and for the remaining officers, who generally charge drivers for being unrestrained or for having unrestrained/improperly restrained passengers. The training for each aspect is as follows:

Occupant Protection also includes child safety seats which is a primary focus. The child safety seat section of Virginia law is a primary offense if the person is under 18 years of age and anywhere in the vehicle (driver or passenger). **Officers who are child safety seat technicians were recertified at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) for an eight hour block. While there, they also witnessed an actual vehicle crash test, which illustrated how seat belt usage impacts passenger safety during a crash.**

The Traffic Enforcement Unit also conducted 18 separate roll call training sessions during which the remainder of our officers were trained in occupant protection enforcement under Virginia law. Each roll call session lasted approximately 30 minutes and highlighted situations where occupant protection violations are primary offenses.

Our agency does not just rely on the Traffic Unit to write or enforce occupant protection violations. The entire Patrol Bureau, Community Officers, and School Resource Officers also work in a uniform capacity where they can enforce all violations. **So it was equally important to train all officers in the subtleties of Virginia's occupant protection law.**

We also used the email system to educate officers on the Occupant Protection study and to help them understand the media campaigns and observer aspects of the study. Lieutenant A. D. Merz, Traffic Enforcement, sent informational emails Division-wide so each officer was informed of the times and places for the study/program. This helped make officers even more vigilant when conducting enforcement activities and especially observant and responsive to occupant protection violations. These emails stressed not only the importance of just writing tickets, but also the reasoning behind the enforcement as it related to reducing crashes as well as reducing injury or preventing death.

Here is an excerpt from message sent out to the whole department in our efforts to assist in this project:

> *Division Personnel:*
>
> *Beginning on February 27th and concluding on March 8th, 2015 the Division of Police will be partnering with the National Transportation and Highway Safety Administration (NTHSA), the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and Old Dominion University (ODU) conducting an enforcement effort that is designed to measure and increase Safety Belt and Child Restraint/Protection usage in Henrico County. Beginning back in July 25th, 2014, DMV and its media contractor initiated a "media blitz"that is specifically targeted to Henrico County, Virginia. DMV will be running ads in the local media, theatres, and billboards along several of the major roadways in Henrico, outlining the importance and benefits of safety belt usage. To support this effort the Division of Police will focus on enforcing all safety belt and child safety restraint laws within the County. The goal of these combined efforts will be to increase safety belt and occupant safety device utilization.*

The letter went on to reiterate the proven prevention and reduction of injuries and death when vehicle occupants correctly use safety belts and restraints and child occupant

protection. It also reminded officers of the Division's Zero Tolerance policy regarding occupant protection violations, to support the DMV media campaign message through their actions, and to report to the Traffic Unit the results of any occupant protection campaign they may conduct during this time period. The message was concise and covered all information regarding the study's enforcement campaign so all officers could do their job and enforce the law.

Public Information/Education

Operation Nighthawk

A Virginia Beach advertising firm, Collier & Associates, Inc., provided the media campaign for this entire, four-year study. NHTSA grant money funded the "Click It Or Ticket" campaign messages on broadcast media such as television and radio. These messages were distributed before and during the enforcement campaigns for each jurisdiction during the timeframe that data was measured and collected. Each segment of the media campaign coincided with that department's enforcement blitz during which specials were added. More officers on the road making traffic stops helped promote drivers' cognitive thought process that police were out and enforcing occupant protection laws, and therefore, they needed to be more compliant in using occupant protection for themselves and their passengers.

Other Media Outlets

Our Media Relations Unit is responsible for handling all of our social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and our web page. They work very closely with the Traffic Unit to post the many messages distributed each year regarding traffic safety related reminders. This can be anything from holiday travel safety to posting messages about extra patrols and/or checkpoints throughout the county. The Media Relations Unit collects information about the various traffic safety related campaigns from national and state government web sites and those of private organizations that sponsor traffic safety campaigns. For example, when the "Click It Or Ticket" campaigns were conducted, our Media Relations Unit posts to our social media talking points, facts, and other traffic safety information of interest to our followers. Social media gets the information out more quickly and more efficiently than other forms of media. **The Media Relations Unit also sends email news releases to its media contacts and posts the news releases to its Internet webpage.**

News conferences were held for both the May and November 'CIOT' campaigns. The 'Route 60'Blitz, which is a collaborative effort of all law enforcement agencies whose jurisdictions border U.S. Route 60 (Williamsburg Road), occurs on the last day of the CIOT campaign conducting saturation patrols. (Virginia State Police, Richmond P.D., Henrico County P.D., New Kent County Sheriff's Office, and James City County P.D.) Every year, we also partner with Richmond International Raceway (RIR) to use their facility for the backdrop of the campaign. We could have no better partner than one whose main focus is vehicle and driver safety. It is only fitting to partner with them to promote seat belt safety and usage.

Another element in the public information and education portion of this study was the use of our two variable message boards. **Starting at the news conference and throughout the CIOT campaign, we deployed our variable message boards with the "Click It Or Ticket" message at various locations throughout Henrico County to raise awareness and encourage compliance**.

The education portion of this study/program was built upon free community presentations and services that our officers provided to Henrico citizens. Quarterly, during the year, our Traffic Unit sets up a large, child safety seat checking station. We set them up at either one of our three police stations or at another, high-visibility location. During the 2015, Henrico County hosted the Virginia Fire Fighter Games and Festival. The Traffic Unit seized this opportunity to reach hundreds of citizens by placing another child safety seat checking station at the festival. This station was extremely popular due to the large number of small children and their parents who attended.

Another element of public information and education includes our agency's Traffic Safety Hotline that citizens can call to report or to address any traffic related issue. This same number also serves as our main contact phone number that citizens call to set up appointments for personal child seat checks. Officer Kimbrough (Child Seat Technician) sets up all appointments, and citizens either come to the one of our three stations or we can go to them. Officer Kimbrough has even responded to the hospitals to install one so that the new parents can take their newborn child home. The great thing that this hotline offers is that our technicians will set up the installation around the citizen's request for when it is convenient for them. After the officers have completed the installation, brochures are handed to them with general knowledge about child seat care and safety.

Every year on the Saturday before National Night Out (the first Tuesday in August), Henrico County hosts its Community Day. All county agencies set up static displays, information booths, services, and invite the community to see their offerings. It is a carnival atmosphere where there are activities for children as well as adults, and all public safety departments also display their equipment and services. The Police Division always has many specialty vehicles as does the Division of Fire, but **we also take this opportunity to promote our traffic safety messages. One of those messages we especially promote is Occupant Protection, especially child safety seats. We set up a station dedicated to child safety seat inspection where officers, who are child seat technicians, help install child seats, answer any questions, and allow the citizens to see all that we have to offer. Posters, banners, and all campaign logos are always hung up around this station to again draw attention to 'Buckling Up'.**

In August 2015, Henrico Police along with other agencies across the state joined forces with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles and the Virginia Department of Health to promote a *Child Safety Seat Emergency ID Sticker.* The sticker, which can be affixed to the side of the child safety seat, is a tool to aid fire, rescue, and law enforcement officers in the event of a serious vehicle crash. The information contains the child's medical and personal information and a contact person as well. This would help police and fire make notifications and medical decisions in case the driver of the vehicle was unresponsive. **This media campaign added another layer of safety to the use of Child Safety Seats and once again reminded drivers of the importance of occupant protection.**

Henrico Officers, who are certified child safety seat technicians, work very closely partnering with several occupant protection groups and organizations. All have a stake in this study/program so every Child Safety Seat Check we offer is reported to the Virginia Department of Health and Safe Kids. These non-law enforcement agency contacts are critical in assisting both sides with public information and education of occupant protection. **While one partner supports the public information/education piece and allows itself to be a resource, the other provides the law enforcement piece to make the message even stronger and more credible.**

Enforcement

Operation Nighthawk

Henrico Police prides itself on being effective and proactive with occupant protection enforcement while working under a law that is a secondary violation on one hand but a primary violation on the other. Regarding adult occupant protection violations; it is a secondary violation, so we have to stop them for some other violation before addressing the seat belt issue. However, it is a primary offense if, "*any driver, and any other person at least 18 years of age and occupying the front seat, of a motor vehicle equipped or required by the provisions of this title to be equipped with a safety belt system, consisting of lap belts, shoulder harnesses, combinations thereof or similar devices, shall wear the appropriate safety belt system at all times while the motor vehicle is in motion on any public highway.*" Also there are certain occupant protection restrictions that apply to children

under the age of eight that require them to be place in a proper child safety restraint system, which may be used as a primary offense.

Our efforts came mainly from the traffic unit, DUI enforcement team, and officers in our Patrol Bureau. Officers conducted various traffic specials to include speeding, traffic signal violations, and occupant protection saturation patrols to ticket violators who were not wearing their seat belts or did not enlist proper child safety seat protection. **We focused our occupant protection enforcement efforts on targeted intersections as well as other roadways in and around the target locations.**

To fund enforcement efforts we used a combination of regular hours (patrol) and grant funded overtime hours at each location and during each portion of the study's enforcement campaign and media blitz. **We conducted 17 specials that focused on traffic signal violations (as the primary offense) at intersections throughout the county. We also conducted 15 other specials that focused on speed enforcement (as the primary offense) in and around those same locations. Because we also focused on getting our night time seat belt usage rate higher, we ran 10 more specials at night at these target locations. The overall total of operations came to 42 enforcement specials geared towards this initiative.**

The chart below details the eight time periods during which Henrico Police conducted the previously mentioned enforcement specials. They coincide with the six observation and data collection operations conducted by Old Dominion University researchers, as well as the two national occupant protection campaigns conducted in May and November of 2015. Outcomes will be discussed later in this narrative, but it is obvious that our officers were very proactive in making traffic stops and issuing citations to the occupant protection violators.

The outcomes discussed in the next section were favorable for law enforcement. Enforcement was also achieved through high police visibility and presence. We used an old policing technique originally designed more for criminal deterrence, but we incorporated its use for traffic violation deterrence. By simply placing a marked police vehicle at a location close to our target area, we gave the impression we were there watching for violators. The vehicle was never left overnight or for long periods of time and was moved frequently.

Enforcement Activity - Occupant Protection Specials

Waves of Enforcement 2015	Overtime Hours	Number of Officers	Total Traffic Stops Made	Total Traffic Tickets	Seat Belt Citations	Child Seat Citations
Jan 30-Feb 1	90	23	207	221	4	2
Mar 27-29	68	11	82	62	0	4
May 8-10	52	9	76	69	1	2
May CIOT	211	61	414	558	63	12
July 10-12	95.5	20	104	90	4	0
Jul 31-Aug 2	59	9	50	47	4	3
Aug 28-30	74	15	91	83	5	0
Nov CIOT	228	38	521	691	75	4
TOTAL	**877.5**	**186**	**1545**	**1821**	**156**	**27**

This chart details the eight time periods during which Henrico Police conducted its enforcement specials.

Citizens (and we) know that if a patrol car sits long enough in the same place, it is perceived as just a decoy car, so they go back to their normal behaviors. But, by moving the patrol vehicle every three hours or so, it kept the citizens guessing as to whether we were actually there or not. As a result, we saw more compliance for these various violations (red lights, speeding, seat belts, etc.) when employing the decoy. The decoy car phase of this project was used during our regular patrol hours and by our Patrol Bureau. Our Patrol Bureau was not discouraged from writing citations at these areas and they were enlisted to conduct the High Visibility Enforcement (HVE) portion of the study to try and get compliance.

Outcomes

Operation Nighthawk Results

For all of 2015, Henrico Police saw an increased number of seat belt and child safety seat citations issued. There were 2,389 tickets written, which included both overtime and regular hours of operation. However, the number of fatal crashes on Henrico County's secondary roads decreased. There were 14 fatal crashes on secondary roads that the Henrico Police Crash Team investigated in 2014, and that was reduced to nine in 2015. **Overall, our daytime seat belt rate stayed within a range from 78 percent to 82 percent and in some surveys, we have seen even higher compliance.** With more officers on the road during daylight hours, it makes sense that the rate should be higher due to that presence.

Our nighttime seat belt rate needed work, so this is why we chose this issue for our local issue for the 2015 Law Enforcement Challenge. Night time rates were as low as 60 percent in late July and early August 2015. **Once the study's media blitz kicked off for our jurisdiction, our officers were assigned nighttime patrols and were sent out from July 27 to August 9. During this time, they concentrated their efforts and were relentless in their enforcement efforts around those target locations. Below is another chart showing the dates and efforts put forth during this 14-day period.**

The four year study concluded in 2015, and the results did not surprise anyone but did shed some light on how to achieve and maintain high occupant protection compliance rates. The main focus was on nighttime seat belt usage given the focus from both federal and state government agencies. The project

Enforcement Activity - Occupant Protection Specials - Outcomes

Date	Hours	Labor Hours	Officers	Stops	Citations	Seat Belt	Child
7/25/15	2000-0300	49.75	7	81	70	12	0
7/26/15	2000-0300	70	10	114	80	13	0
7/27/15	1900-0200	63.5	11	106	62	11	2
8/1/15	2000-0300	35	5	37	28	3	0
8/2/15	2000-0300	56	8	68	58	1	3
8/3/15	1900-0100	91	11	91	61	6	0
8/8/15	1600-1900	42	14	41	44	2	0
TOTALS		**407.25**	**66**	**538**	**403**	**48**	**5**

This chart shows the dates and efforts put forth during the *Operation Nighthawk* 14-day period.

attempted to determine if selective enforcement operation specials could increase nighttime seat belt compliance over a period of time.

The results from the Old Dominion study based on their observations of seat belt usage showed that overall in Henrico County that day time usage varied between 80 percent to 90 percent compliance, which is a great number. This number matches those from states that have primary seat belt laws. Henrico County Police still continue to raise this compliance rate even higher.

During the study, Henrico County's nighttime seat belt compliance rate varied; it dropped to a low of 60 percent and rose to a high of 80 percent. This trend was also predictable when compared to the national trend of nighttime seat belt usage, which is also lower than daytime usage. The study showed, after every media campaign blitz combined with selective enforcement, the compliance percentage would rise for a short period of time (usually one month.) Then recidivism set in and the numbers would roll back down. With the combination of regular high visibility enforcement, media campaigns, and with good supervision over a traffic unit, these numbers could stay high.

The Old Dominion observers also concluded that Henrico drivers were 1.12 times more likely to be buckled up during the campaign blitzes. An additional finding from the study was that the support of leadership and first-line supervisors within an agency was critical to the law enforcement activity level and the outcome of this type of selective enforcement.

Some statistical results that the ODU study found corroborated our own crash data analysis of our occupant protection enforcement saturation operations. What we found is that after an occupant protection enforcement saturation operation that was combined with a media campaign, the number of crashes involving unrestrained drivers or passengers decreased. We also found that when neither of these occurred, the number would rise again. **Below is a chart that shows the number of crashes per month for 2015 that involved unrestrained drivers and passengers. By comparing the month of enforcement to the following month afterwards, we saw that in every single instance, the number of crashes decreased.**

Based on the data in the chart below, it is easy to see when we conducted occupant protection enforcement specials in one month, the following month the

Enforcement Activity - Occupant Protection Specials - Compliance

Month	Crashes	Enforcement Wave	Compliance Up or Down from Previous Month
January	27	Jan 30th to Feb 1st	
February	7		Down 20
March	14	March 27th to 29th	Up 7
April	10		Down 4
May	14	May 18th to May 31st	Up 4
June	11		Down 3
July	19	July 27th to August 9th	Up 8
August	15	Aug 28th to Aug 30th	Down 4
September	12		Down 3
October	18		Up 6
November	12	Nov 21st to Nov 28th	Down 6
December	9		Down 3

This chart shows the number of crashes per month for 2015 that involved unrestrained drivers and passengers.

numbers were always lower. When there was not as much police presence, the number rose again, which would influence conducting another special. This cycle of compliance and recidivism occurred regularly over the six waves of enforcement combined with the two national 'Click it or Ticket' campaigns.

Henrico County Police Traffic Unit conducted a similar analysis separately from the Old Dominion study to compare results. Our results matched the research study. Thus we have concluded that, with high visibility enforcement, repeated media campaigns, and supervision willing to work together, favorable outcomes result to include higher seat belt usage and lower vehicle crashes involving unrestrained drivers.

Finally, our officers were recognized for their hard work not only within the Division but also at the state level. Officer Chris Read won the Virginia DMV, Highway Safety Officer 2015 Seat belt Leadership Award. This is the second year in a row that an officer from our department has won this award. Officer Read also received the 2015 Top Occupant Protection Officer of the Year award for writing the most tickets in this category. Officer Ray Milleker was given the award for 2015 Top Patrol Occupant Protection Officer of the Year since he was the one who wrote the most citations in our Patrol Bureau.

Henrico County Police Division strives to promote occupant protection and safety through both education and enforcement. The study confirmed that both are required to achieve higher occupant protection rates. Nonetheless, despite all of our efforts, many people still choose to not wear their seat belts. If that is the decision they make, we will be there to address it through our enforcement efforts and hopefully our Crash Team will not be the ones to respond should they be unrestrained in a crash.

All data discussed in this section comes from the researchers at Old Dominion University, Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, and Henrico County Records Unit.

After seeing the results of this data, here is something to ponder:

Traffic enforcement is designed to promote public safety by stopping violations, reducing crashes, and enhancing public safety. At the same time, it deters other drivers from committing infractions, and it historically changes behavior of the ticketed driver and onlookers. Presence of law enforcement is seen by the motoring public. While operating a motor vehicle, if safe driving and unsafe alternatives are combined, they serve to balance each other out. Hopefully, the message will at least be to, "Remember to drive safely, and 'Click It Or Ticket'."

These photos are from the "Route 60 Blitz - Click It Or Ticket" campaign. It is an annual, collaborative, seat belt enforcement effort that includes Virginia State Police, Richmond Police, Henrico Police, New Kent County Sheriff's Office and James City County Police. The kickoff took place at the Richmond International Raceway complex, Henrico, Virginia.