

Wearing Your Seat Belt, From A Police Officer's Perspective

Article by: David Quinn

We've heard it before "Wear your seat belt." It's the same old line. But ride along with a police officer to accident scenes daily, and you'll probably change your mind real quick if you don't wear them now.

When I first started in police work, I didn't wear my seat belt. At the time, there was no law requiring it. But my opinion changed very quickly after doing the job for only a short period of time.

For starters, I discovered that some of your very minor accidents resulted in more serious injuries. A typical scenario would be a person driving down the road (doing nothing wrong), say at 35 MPH. A second person pulls out in front of them at the last second, and a collision occurs. Because of the low speeds involved, you wouldn't expect any injuries. However, for the person doing nothing wrong and not wearing their seat belt, that is simply not true. Most of these people are transported to the Hospital with face and knee injuries (as the body obviously moves forward on impact).

Another injury that is very common is broken wrists. You'll typically see the top bone exit the flesh at the wrist as a result of the person grasping on to the steering wheel during impact at the car accident. The problem is, the momentum is so great that no matter how hard the person holds on, their body is still going to move forward, which of course causes the injury. If the person would have been wearing their seat belt, the body of course would not have moved forward.

A typical violent accident scene that police officers see is when the person is thrown through the front windshield. This happens a lot, and speeds need only be at 35 MPH or more (typically) for this to occur. These people rarely survive, and if they do, there are severe consequences like loss of arms, legs, or even becoming paralyzed.

Here are two car accidents that are true stories that resulted in death. Had the person been wearing their seat belt, they would be alive today. The first involved a husband and a wife driving down the road minding their own business, doing nothing wrong. When they went through an intersection for a green light, a second vehicle ran the red light and clipped their rear fender/bumper. As a result, the husband (driver) and wife's vehicle flipped over. As it flipped, the driver (husband) was ejected out the driver's door. He would have lived, but his own car landed on top of him, killing him instantly. The wife walked away literally with minor bruising.

Another accident involved a young girl coming home from work. She wasn't wearing her seat belt. She was doing the speed limit, but because the roads were wet, she ended up losing control on the freeway and rolled her truck. She was ejected from the passenger window, and would have lived. However, the truck landed on top of her and she died. What was even more horrible was that an autopsy revealed that her death was a result of suffocation. This of course was her vehicle on top of her. Had she been wearing her seat belt, she would have lived.

My perspective now as an officer? I wear my seat belt for me, not the law. I know that my chances of survival are significantly increased if I wear it as opposed to not wearing it. I know this from first hand knowledge. You can find more information at <http://realpolice.net>, and even ask real police officers questions at our message board of over 20,000 registered members.