



**Division of State Patrol
Policy and Procedure**

Number
15-12

Subject SAVED BY THE BELT CLUB	
Author/Originator Bureau of Field Operations	Approved by Superintendent <i>Anthony L. Russell</i>
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I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Division of State Patrol (DSP) to increase public awareness of the lifesaving value of seat belts.

II. BACKGROUND

This program is designed to recognize persons whose lives were saved or who were spared serious injury due to their good judgment in wearing seat belts. Candidates for the award will be submitted by officers investigating traffic crashes. Candidates meeting the membership criteria will be screened and approved at the region level.

Events to honor the award recipient will be developed at the local level. Honorees will be presented with a certificate of local design approved by the Region Commander, which identifies the recipient as a member of the “Saved by the Belt” Club.

III. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Saved by the Belt Club: Persons involved in recent motor vehicle crashes (within the previous six months) may be considered. Candidates can be nominated by the investigating officer or by someone knowledgeable of the incident.

A. Membership Criteria

1. The most important criteria is that regardless of the circumstances of the crash, a person is more likely to have survived death or serious personal injury because a seat belt was worn.

- a. Local discretion shall be used in deciding whether persons, who cause a crash, even if belted, should be considered.
 - b. Consideration is discouraged when persons are cited for serious offenses, such as Operating While Intoxicated.
 - c. Extreme discretion should be employed when considering those who survive a crash, when another in the same vehicle died.
2. Candidates should be residents of the State of Wisconsin, students at an in-state university or school, or military service members stationed and residing in Wisconsin. Out-of-state residents may be nominated, recognizing that the awareness effort may be largely lost and publicity difficult. However, the benefit to recognizing the motorist remains significant.

B. Materials

1. Investigating officers should utilize the Nomination – Saved by the Belt Club form (SP4387) for nominating possible members.
2. Sample letters, news media advisory, news release, employer contact, and recipient notification (Attachments 1-4).
3. Certificates are available through and maintained at the region level for awards.

C. Coordination

1. The Saved by the Belt Club is to be managed at the region level.
2. Records of applications and award recipients shall be maintained at the region level.
3. Reports of the Club's progress will be forwarded to the Director of the Bureau of Field Operations when requested.

D. Public Awareness

1. Efforts to improve public awareness shall be developed at the local area particular to the residence of the recipient. As much as possible, these efforts should include events that involve a public presentation of the certificate with local news media invited. State Patrol participation shall include the Region Commander or designee and the investigating officer, when possible.

2. Out-of-region or out-of-state recipients will be honored differently with a news media advisory and release. State Patrol participation for in-state events is encouraged by the local Region Commander or designee.
3. As a precaution, some sensitivity for the willingness of award recipients to participate in a press-related event must be established. Potential honorees who elect not to participate should still receive the awards, but in a more personal manner respective of their wishes.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Officer

1. Investigate the traffic crash (with photographs).
2. Determine the person's eligibility for "Saved by the Belt" Club.
 - a. Seat belt used? In the officer's best professional estimate the person was wearing a seat belt.
 - b. As a result of seat belt use, the person survived a potentially fatal or serious injury crash with no injury or only minor injury.
 - c. Membership criteria is met per section III. A. of this policy.
3. Complete the nomination form (SP4387) with explanation.
4. Forward nomination form to region headquarters with crash report (DT4000) and supplements.
5. May attend award presentation, if applicable.

B. Traffic Crash Report Coordinator/Designee

1. Separate nomination form (SP4387) and forward to the Region Commander.
2. Maintain copies of nomination forms for tracking to ensure conclusion to each nomination.
3. Prepare approved citations and awards.
4. Maintain stock of appropriate certificates and related materials at region level.
5. Prepare award letters and news media releases.

6. Coordinate the award presentation.
 7. Maintain file of award recipients and prepare statistical support data from file information.
- C. Region Commander
1. Approve the nomination for award.
 2. Invite the honoree for the presentation.
 3. Attend the ceremony and present the award.
 4. Respond to requests for data regarding the number of nominations and awards, when applicable.
 5. Ensure the integrity of the program by active review and encourage employee involvement.
- D. Other Agency Involvement
1. County sheriffs and local police departments are invited to participate by joining the Division of State Patrol in this program. The agency responsible for the crash investigation will originate the nomination and make any eventual presentation.
 2. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT), Division of State Patrol Bureau of Transportation Safety supports this program and may increase direct involvement when other law enforcement agencies participate.

IV. REFERENCE

Nomination – Saved by the Belt Club form, SP4387

NEWS MEDIA ADVISORY

WHAT: Award presentation to latest member of "Saved by the Belt" Club

WHEN: _____
Day of Week

Date

Time

WHERE: _____
DSP Post or Police Department

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

PROGRAM: Local resident, _____, will be honored after escaping serious injury in a recent traffic crash by wearing a safety belt. A presentation of a "Saved by the Belt" certificate will be made by:

Name of Ranking Officer

OTHER DETAILS: Press packets will be available containing background information on the "Saved by the Belt" Club and a news release on the honoree. Time will be allotted for photos and interviews, if desired.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

(City, WI, Date) -- A local resident, _____, recently became a member of the "Saved by the Belt" Club after he/she escaped serious injury in a traffic crash by wearing a safety belt.

(Name of Ranking Officer) said _____ was named to the Club as a result of an investigation of his/her accident on (Date and Location).

According to the officer at the scene, the crash occurred when: (give details)

(Name of Ranking Officer) stated _____'s safety belt prevented him/her from (being thrown into the windshield) (ejected from the vehicle). "Without the safety belt, the crash forces involved in this accident most likely would have resulted in serious or fatal injury," he/she noted.

"We are recognizing _____ for his/her good judgment in wearing a safety belt in hopes that all other motorists and their passengers will follow his/her example," (Name of Ranking Officer) stated, " _____ is living proof that safety belts save lives."

In a presentation at (Location), _____ was honored with a "Saved by the Belt" certificate. It is just one component of a comprehensive educational and incentive campaign to increase significantly the use of safety belts by all users of Wisconsin highways.

Members are nominated by investigating officers or others with knowledge of a crash who can state that the individual's use of a safety belt prevented serious or fatal injury.

State highway safety figures indicate that many fatalities and serious injuries could have been avoided with the use of safety equipment. We owe it to ourselves to make sure everyone wears a safety belt.

For additional information, contact: (Name of Ranking Officer)

SAMPLE LETTER TO EMPLOYER

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip Code)

Dear (Name):

The Wisconsin State Patrol currently participates in a program to recognize individuals who, by wearing safety belts, escape serious injury in traffic crashes. One of your employees, _____, recently was involved in a crash the Division investigated and we determined a safety belt did indeed (save his/her life, prevent serious injury).

Consequently, on (Date) at (Time), _____ will be named to the "Saved by the Belt" Club in a presentation at (Location). Because the purpose of the Club is to increase awareness of the lifesaving benefits of wearing safety belts, I hope you will be able to participate or highlight this event in a company publication.

In this particular case, _____'s safety belt prevented him/her from being (ejected from the car, thrown into the windshield). Without the safety belt, the crash forces involved in this accident most likely would have resulted in serious or fatal injury.

In our presentations, each individual is honored with a certificate signed by _____, indicating the person was "Saved by the Belt."

I hope you will take the time to recognize _____ for his/her good judgment in buckling up. He/she is living proof that safety belts save lives.

Sincerely,

(Title)

PROPOSED LETTER TO RECIPIENT

(Name)
(Address)
(City, State, Zip Code)

Dear **(Name)**:

Safety belt usage depends upon the awareness of the safety benefits included. State highway safety figures indicate many fatalities and serious injuries could have been avoided with the use of safety equipment. We owe it to ourselves to make sure everyone wears a safety belt.

Recently, you were involved in a traffic crash. Whereas that experience may have been traumatic, you can have the satisfaction of knowing that your good judgment in wearing a seat belt prevented serious injury. In the expert opinion of the investigating trooper, you were "Saved by the Belt."

Your commendable decision to use the seat belt is a personal reflection of your concern for safety and your compliance with laws. Your decision is sincerely appreciated by your family, your friends, and others who use Wisconsin highways.

Simply said, "Thank you!" You are living proof that seat belts work.

Sincerely,

(Title)