

Seat Belts Save Lives
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The title of this article says it all. Seat belts do save lives. It has been proven time and time again that your chances of surviving a motor vehicle accident increase greatly when buckled up. As emergency service workers you've probably said that to the public time and time again. Many of us can recall an incident we responded to where we have said, "he would have been dead if it weren't for his seat belt." Unfortunately, we have also said, "he would have lived had he been wearing a seat belt."

You would think with all of this hands on experience, first responders would lead the way in seat belt usage. Unfortunately, the opposite seems to be the fact. This morning I read another report of a firefighter being ejected from his vehicle and losing his life. Please refer back to the title of this article. In the last several years we've placed such a great emphasis on safety. From blood borne pathogen awareness to advanced PPE to SCBA training mandates and on and on. Yet, we seem to have trouble with the basic concept of buckling up!

One of the major changes in vehicle design over the years has been securing tools and other objects in the cab so they do not become dangerous missiles in the event of a collision. This has probably been responsible for preventing a great number of injuries. Yet, it appears we have not given much thought to that 200 pound firefighter or EMS provider who could become a lethal missile flying around the compartment immediately after a collision. Add to that their helmet, SCBA, boots, or any other item which could cause serious harm to everyone else on board.

So next time you're responding to a call or even riding back to the station, buckle up. And look around you. Anyone else who is not buckled provides you with a hazard to your own wellbeing and jeopardizes the chances of everyone going home. If your organization does not have a seat belt usage policy, put one in place as soon as possible. There is a sample policy on the ESIP website under Loss Control.

Don't allow one of your members to be the next national headline. Please refer back to the title of this article.