



## Buckle Up in Berrien

As summer begins, many exciting events will be taking place. From town festivals to graduations to spending time at one of the many local beaches. The summer means fun and relaxation for many. The Berrien County Health Department along with the Office of Highway Safety Planning would like for all Berrien County citizens to remember to think safety when driving this season.

As you may have heard on the radio or see on television, local law enforcement will be on the look out for people not wearing their safety belts, especially during the nighttime hours. Car accidents are the leading cause of death for people under the age of 35. Safety belts can prevent death in at least half of these accidents. According

to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the odds of being killed in a motor vehicle crash are three times higher at night than they are during the day.

*In 2005, more than 15,000 passenger vehicle occupants died in traffic crashes between the nighttime hours of 6:00pm and 6:00am, and nearly two-thirds of those killed were not wearing their*

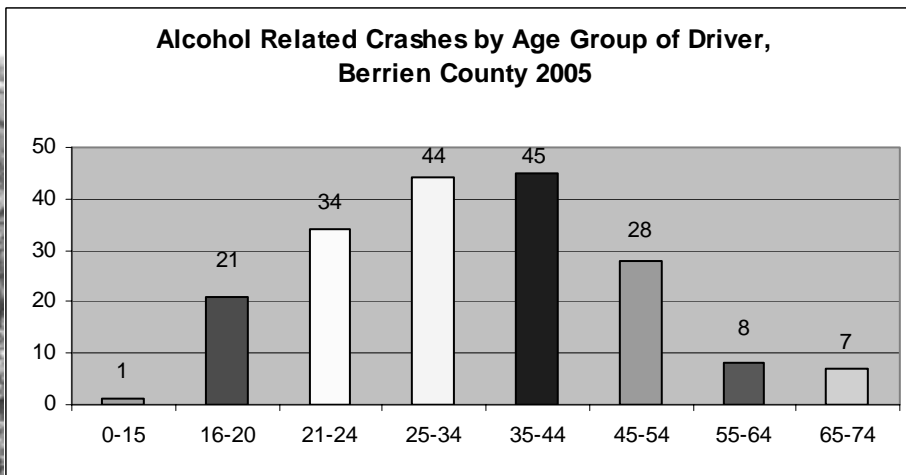
This initiative to enforce seat belt violations at night has two goals. First, currently Michigan can boast a safety belt compliance of over 94% and the state would like to keep it that way. Second, watching for violations at night will hopefully stop many drivers from



making the decision to drive after drinking.

In Michigan in 2006 the motor vehicle traffic deaths were the lowest they have been since World War II. Lets keep that trend going!

## Drinking and Driving in Berrien County



Even though our number of fatal vehicle crashes have decreased, there are still many people being injured by drivers who choose to drink before getting behind the wheel. The Office of Highway Safety Planning shows that in 2006, Berrien County had 199 total alcohol related crashes, 8 ending in fatalities, 80 ending in injury with 102 total people being injured, and 111 causing property damage. Along with numbers of people hurt and injured in alcohol related motor vehicle accidents it

is reported that in 2006, 888 people were charged with a drinking and driving crime by Berrien County Trial Court.

It is important that everyone remember to **have a sober driver** or safe way of getting home this and all seasons.

The cost of a drinking and driving infraction can leave people with very little money to enjoy the summer season. According to the people attending the Highway Safety classes after being arrested

for impaired driving, the average cost for the charge has been roughly \$3,000-\$4,000 dollars.

In Michigan, 1st and 2nd offenses are misdemeanors, 3rd or subsequent offenses are felonies.

With our fatality numbers going down, our roads are becoming safer. It is important to realize that citizens of Michigan and Berrien County have heeded the word of caution and are buckling-up and driving safer & sober.

### Berrien County Health Department:

Preventing Disease, Prolonging Life and Protecting the Health of the Community.



## REDUCE YOUR RISK

June is reduce your risk month. The Berrien County Health Department will provide you with information throughout the month on chronic health conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, asthma, and substance abuse. Chronic diseases can often be prevented or minimized by healthy eating and exercise. For more information on any of these topics, please call the health department at 926-7121. Happy Summer!

### Michigan's Safety Belt and Child Restraint Laws



#### RESTRAINT USE REQUIREMENTS

- Driver and front seat passengers 16 years and older need to wear a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt
- Children 4 years or older but less than 16 years in rear seats if all available belts are used and driver and all front seat passengers are properly belted
- Children 4 years or older but less than 16 years in front seat of a pickup without an extended cab or jump seats, if all available belts are used
- All children under age 4 are to be in an approved child safety seat, in all seating positions
- A person who violates this section is responsible for a civil infraction.



The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

#### Benton Harbor

769 Pipestone  
P.O. Box 706  
926-7121

M-139 Office  
2106 S. M-139  
927-5623

School Based  
870 Colfax Ave  
925-4500

#### Niles

1205 N. Front St.  
684-2800

#### Three Oaks

21 N. Elm  
756-2008

Or visit us on the web at [www.berriencohthdept.org](http://www.berriencohthdept.org)

This page is sponsored by the Berrien County Health Department

