



Ending the ‘Back Seat Driver’ Stigma—Speaking Up Saves Lives!

U.S. Marks National Passenger Safety Week—Jan. 20-27

*Supporters Explain How Passengers Can Effectively Raise Their Voices
When They See Dangers and Risks*

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Jan. 7, 2025 — Experts say America’s roadway safety crisis, resulting in 440,990 people killed in 2023, means we must throw away the stereotype of a critical backseat driver because such a vocal passenger could be the key to stemming the blood flow.

National Passenger Safety Week, recognized annually by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration as the last week of January, will occur Jan. 20-27, 2025. Supporters believe that “One courageous voice can change one deadly choice.” We Save Lives and The National Road Safety Foundation launched National Passenger Safety Week and the coalition includes 60 other organizations.

For the third year in a row, NPSW empowers passengers to “SPEAK UP” when their lives are in danger due to a reckless driver, especially when they witness any of the three most frequent and persistent behavioral safety factors in fatal crashes:

- People in motor vehicles not wearing seat belts
- Driving while impaired from alcohol
- Speeding

Distracted driving is also on the list, as an estimated 3,308 people were killed in crashes that involved distracted drivers, and 289,310 were injured in 2022; advocates believe the total number of victims is even higher.

NPSW is putting an emphasis on raising awareness of the U.S. Department of Transportation hotspots that identify areas that have experienced a high concentration of fatal roadway crashes. These efforts also include highlighting the cities Forbes Advisor found are the most dangerous for drivers: Albuquerque, Memphis and Detroit.

Candace Lightner, founder and president of We Save Lives, says, “Backseat passengers need to speak up. It’s an ability I had to embrace once I gave up my car and became a passenger. I have met too many families affected by these tragedies. There is a solution. We can stop crashes just by speaking up. We must stop worrying about being an anxious passenger or a busybody...ask yourself if you love yourself enough to speak up!”

“When people understand the dangers of driving impaired, distracted, aggressively and drowsy, there’s a better chance they will speak up if they are passengers in a car being driven unsafely. The National Passenger Safety Week campaign hopes to empower passengers about how they can save lives by calling out unsafe driving before crashes happen. We can’t worry about being considered ‘backseat drivers.’ It’s for everyone’s safety,” says Michelle Anderson, director of operations at The National Road Safety Foundation,

Tammy Gweedo McGee, founder of the Gweedo Memorial Foundation, says, “My son Conner and another teen were passengers in a car with an unlicensed driver who had bragged online about speeding. On homecoming night, the driver, going twice the speed limit, lost control, hit a tree and all three boys — Conner, the driver and a passenger— were killed. I would like to believe that Conner urged him to slow down. But I will never know.”

NPSW’s website at nationalpassengersafety.org includes the Courage to Intervene Promise, which states:

“I will stop my friends and loved ones from driving buzzed, drunk, or drugged

I will not ride with them if they are under any kind of influence and will encourage others to do the same

I will stop my friends from using their cell phones while driving

I will not risk my life to keep others from killing themselves or someone else

I will have the Courage to Intervene

Because I Care . . .”

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