**2018 THANKSGIVING BUCKLE UP CAMPAIGN**

**SAMPLE OP-ED**

**SOCIAL NORMING VERSION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]**

**CONTACT: [Name, Phone Number, E-mail Address]**

**Note: Before filling in the names of the organization and organization spokesperson, you MUST contact them for permission to use their names in this op-ed. Also, you must get their approval for the language of their quotations, and any changes or additions they may require. Only after this is done should you issue the press release.**

***Buckle Up–Every Trip. Every Time.***

**You’ll Be Grateful You Did**

Thanksgiving marks the beginning of the holiday season, as well as the year’s busiest travel weekend. Whether you’re driving across the street or across the country to reach your Thanksgiving feast, it’s imperative to wear your seat belt as you travel. With increased traffic brings the increased possibility of a traffic crash. That’s why **[Local Organization]** is partnering with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to share an important lifesaving reminder: *Buckle Up—Every Trip. Every Time.*

During the 2016 Thanksgiving weekend (6 p.m. Wednesday, November 23, to 5:59 a.m. Monday, November 28), 341 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes nationwide. Tragically, 49 percent of those killed were not buckled up, representing an increase in seat belt use compared to the same weekend in 2015, when 52 percent of those killed in traffic crashes were unrestrained. Nighttime proved even more deadly, with 55 percent of Thanksgiving weekend crashes occurring at night. Much like drunk driving, these deaths represent needless tragedies for families across America. These deaths could have been completely prevented with the simple click of a seat belt. Research shows that wearing a seat belt is one of the simplest things you can do to stay safe when you’re traveling in a vehicle, especially during busy travel periods like Thanksgiving.

NHTSA estimates that proper seat belt use reduces the risk of fatal injury to front seat passengers by 45 percent, and the risk of moderate to serious injury by 50 percent. In 2016, approximately 14,668 people survived crashes because they were buckled up. If everyone had worn their seat belts that year, an additional 2,456 lives could have been saved. NHTSA’s research also reveals that males are more likely to be unbuckled than females in a fatal crash, and that younger drivers are also at greater risk of being unbuckled. In fact, in 2016, 52 percent of the males killed in crashes were not buckled up at the time of the crash, compared to 40 percent of females. The 13- to 15-year-old and 18- to 34-year-old age groups had the highest percentages (62% and 59%, respectively) of occupants killed who were not wearing their seat belts at the time of the fatal crash.

Seat belt use should be a no-brainer. We know that regular seat belt use vastly reduces fatalities. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, let’s be grateful for the most basic vehicle technology that has, without a doubt, saved the most lives. Help us spread the message: *Buckle Up—Every Trip. Every Time*. We all want to see our friends and family arrive safe and sound to the Thanksgiving table.

For more information about the importance of seat belt safety, visit www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/seat-belts.

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