

# City of Gulfport News Release

Police Department PIO

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*Chief Alan Weatherford today announced that:*

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For the first time in Mississippi's history, more than 75 percent of its citizens are using a seatbelt when they get into an automobile. This is a major milestone for the state, but when you compare it to the national average of 83 percent you can see how far Mississippi has to go.

That's why the Gulfport Police Department will join Department of Public Safety Commissioner Jim Simpson and the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, the Mississippi Highway Patrol and hundreds of law enforcement officials, highway safety representatives and safety advocates nationwide for the annual Click It or Ticket campaign.

"Nighttime drivers and passengers continue to be among those least likely to wear seat belts. Consequently, they are also among those most likely to die in motor vehicle crashes. That is why Gulfport Police Department is supporting enhanced nighttime enforcement of seat belt laws during the May 24 – June 6, 2010, *Click It or Ticket* campaign," said Lt. Brian Smith, supervisor of Gulfport Police Department's Traffic Enforcement Unit.

High-visibility enforcement such as the *Click It or Ticket* mobilization is credited with increasing the national belt usage rate from 58 percent in 1994 to an observed usage rate of 84 percent in 2009. Belt use saves thousands of lives each year across America. In 2008 alone, seat belts saved 13,250 lives nationwide of these 267 lives were saved in Mississippi. If everyone wore seat belts – 100 percent usage – 173 more lives could be saved.

Chief Alan Weatherford advises, "Local motorists should be prepared for stepped up *Click It or Ticket* activities that will take place around the clock. If Gulfport Police Officers find you on the road unbuckled anytime or anywhere, you can expect to get a ticket – not a warning. No excuses and no exceptions."

Remember this May 24 to June 6, 2010: It's *Click It or Ticket*. Buckle up and encourage your loved ones to do the same. You will save the cost of a ticket and may even save a life. Overtime for this project is funded by a grant from the Mississippi Governor's Office of Highway from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

***"Building a safer Gulfport together"***