

# Safety drive buckles down on seat-belt law offenders

■ Accidents involving motorists without seat belts on cost Americans \$14.3 billion each year

By Josh Ryneal  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Lane County Sheriff's Office ended a week-long traffic enforcement blitz on Monday, during which they tried to target drivers who ignore seat-belt laws.

Officers waited along roads and patrolled highways, hoping to make motorists realize the risk of driving unbuckled, Patrol Sergeant Steve Broome said.

"We have been working with two programs — the 3 Flags Seat Belt Enforcement Program and Operation ABC — to make sure that seat-belt laws are enforced," Broome said.

The 3 Flags program, which is primarily implemented on the West Coast and Canada, provides federal grants to pay officers overtime to enforce seat-belt and other safety violations. Operation America Buckles up Children (ABC) utilizes partnerships between law

enforcement agencies nationwide and the National Highway Safety Administration.

The Lane County Sheriff's Office has been a part of the 3 Flags program for three years, and has been a member of Operation ABC since its inception in 1997.

"These programs are key to saving lives and preventing critical injuries," Broome said.

According to a National Safety Council study, Americans pay \$14.3 billion per year in injury-related costs incurred by motorists not wearing seat belts, and 60 percent of children who die in vehicle crashes are unrestrained.

Broome said that the sheriff's office picked the week of May 22-29 because it contained the first holiday weekend of the summer.

"We see a large volume of traffic this time of year, and we want to do saturation patrols to do our part for this program," Broome said.

Broome said that deputies tried to target a specific area and either patrol it or park by the side of the road and observe motorists.

"It has been a very successful effort," he said.

## Law enforcement

The Lane County Sheriff's Office participated during the Memorial Day weekend in two national programs aimed at enforcing required seat belt usage including:

**3 Flags**, which pays officers overtime wages to enforce traffic safety laws

**America Buckles up Children**, which coordinates efforts between law enforcement agencies and the National Highway Safety Administration.

SOURCE: Lane County Sheriff's Office

The Eugene Police Department is also part of the 3 Flags program and has been involved in a two-month effort to enforce seat-belt laws around the city.

EPD spokesman Dave Poppe said that while the program is considered routine enforcement, they have "written literally hundreds of citations so far."

"Eugene is already pretty good about wearing seat belts," he said. "We have something like a 94 percent compliance rate."

they tried to take him into custody

**May 16**, Prohibited Skateboarding, 1300 block Alder Street: Skateboarder was riding in a prohibited area and ignored police orders to stop

**May 16**, Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument, University parking lot number 42: Forged

University parking permit

**May 19**, Theft by Mail, 2000 block Harris Street: Two checks stolen from outgoing mail

**May 19**, Criminal Mischief, Erb Memorial Union: Suspect arrested for vandalizing parked bicycles along 1300 block Alder Street

SOURCE: Eugene Police Department

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## CRIME WATCH

Reported May 10 through May 20

**May 16**, Disorderly Conduct, 1300 block Patterson Street: Man wandering in traffic threatened police when

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