

*(Abstract)*

Efforts to reduce motor vehicle deaths and injuries in the U.S. recently have concentrated on belt use advertising campaigns, buzzer-light reminder systems and starter-interlock belt systems in cars. Carefully controlled studies of advertising campaigns find no effect on belt use. The buzzer-light system had no effect and the interlock's effect was temporary and provoked adverse consumer reaction. Strategies requiring no action by the person to be protected have been available but neglected. In the U.S. injuries in motor vehicles are the leading cause of death of persons aged 1-35 years. More than half of traumatic spinal cord lesions that result in paralysis occur in motor vehicle crashes (Kraus, et al., in press). About 3,927,000 motor vehicle related injuries were estimated from the National Health Survey in 1973 - almost 1 in every 50 U.S. residents (Health Resources Administration, 1974). Motor vehicle occupants sustain about three-fourths of fatal injuries with the remainder distributed among pedestrians, motorcyclists, and bicyclists. The incidence and severity of vehicle occupant injuries would be reduced substantially if people would use seat belts and shoulder harnesses available in most cars and some other vehicles. However, attempts to increase belt use have had, at best, temporary and, usually, no success.