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CPSC Halloween Safety Tips
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CPSC HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

The US consumer Product Safety Commission has issued a safety alert to parents and guardians of children who go trick-or-treating on Halloween. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of careful examination of all treats before children are allowed to eat them. Children should be warned not to eat any of their treats before they get home.

Health-care providers are also encouraged to relate the following safety tips to parents and children for Halloween:

- * Although flame resistant articles can catch on fire, costumes, masks, beards, and wigs should be labeled "Flame Resistant." Such labeling indicates that they will resist burning and should extinguish quickly once removed from the ignition source. Flimsy materials and outfits with big, baggy sleeves or billowing skirts should be avoided to minimize the risk of contact with candles or other sources of ignition.
- * Costumes should be light and bright enough to be clearly visible to motorists. For greater visibility in dusk or darkness, costumes should be decorated or trimmed with reflective tape which will 'glow' in the beam of a car's headlights. Bags or sacks should also be light colored and decorated with reflective tape. Reflective tape is usually available in hardware, bicycle, and sporting goods stores. Children should also carry flashlights to see, and be seen, more easily.
- * Costumes should be short enough to prevent children from tripping and falling. Children should also wear safe, sturdy shoes. Mother's high heels are not a good idea for safe walking.
- * Hats should be tied securely to prevent them from slipping over children's eyes.
- * Apply a natural mask of cosmetics rather than have a child wear a loose-fitting mask which might restrict breathing or obscure vision. If a mask is used, make sure eyeholes are large enough to allow full vision, and make sure the mask fits securely.
- * Swords, knives, or similar accessories should be discouraged, but if they are carried, they should be made of soft or flexible material.
- * Smaller children should always be accompanied by an older responsible child or adult. All children should use the sidewalk rather than walk in the street and should **WALK, not run**, from house to house. Children should be cautioned against running out between parked cars or across yards and lawns where ornaments, furniture, or clotheslines present dangers.
- * Children should only go to homes where residents have turned on outside lights as a sign of welcome. Children should not enter homes or apartments unless they are accompanied by an adult.

- * Those receiving trick-or-treaters should remove anything that could be an obstacle from steps, lawns, and porches. Candlelit jack-o-lanterns should be kept away from landings and doorsteps where costumes could brush against the flame. Indoor jack-o-lanterns should be kept away from curtains, decorations, or other furnishings that could be ignited.
- * Parents should encourage home parties and celebrations in place of trick-or-treating.

Consumers wishing further information may call the CPSC toll-free hotline at 800-638-CPSC. The teletypewriter number for the hearing impaired is 800-638-8270.

COMPARISON OF OBSERVED AND SELF-REPORTED SEAT BELT USE RATES -- UNITED STATES*

To measure compliance with seat belt use laws, most states have estimated belt use by direct observation of vehicle occupants. In addition, since 1984, several states have recorded seat belt use data as part of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) telephone survey.¹⁻³ Previous studies indicate that telephone surveys usually report higher belt use than do observation surveys conducted in similar areas at similar times.^{4, 5} A systematic comparison of self-reported belt use rates in 15 states** from the 1987 BRFSS with observed belt use rates in 1987 in the same states follows.

The BRFSS telephone surveys used similar designs in each state. A statistically valid random sample of all adults in each state was obtained by random digit dialing. Each survey asked the same questions and classified the responses into the same five categories. Thus, the BRFSS surveys in each state can be considered replications of the same survey.

For the observation surveys, some states used probability sampling techniques to select locations and times. These surveys produced statistically valid estimates of the actual belt use rates under the conditions surveyed.⁺ Other states used locations and times selected by judgment. The accuracy of the estimates from these surveys is unknown.

In the BRFSS self-reported surveys, the number of affirmative answers was derived in two ways: as the total number of respondents who reported "always" using seat belts and as the sum of those who reported "always" and "nearly always" using them. The average self-reported "always" use exceeded observed use by about 8% and ranged from 11% below observed use to 24% above. The average "always or nearly always" self-reported use exceeded observed use by 27%, with a range of 12% above observed use to 39% above. To further examine the relationship between observed and reported seat belt use, simple linear regressions were used for each state (Figures 1 and 2). The relation is described moderately well by either regression; approximately 54% of the variation in prevalence of observed use was accounted for by the prevalence of self-reported use. In the regression line for which "always" was used as the definition, a one-percentage-point increase in self-reported use accounted for a 0.7-percentage-point increase in observed use. When "always" and "nearly always" were used, a one-percentage-point increase in self-reported belt use accounted for a nearly one-percentage-point increase in observed use. However, these figures are valid only within the range of the self-reported seat belt use data.

MMWR Editorial Note: Worldwide experience has demonstrated that seat belt use laws can substantially reduce deaths and injuries on highways. More than 30 foreign countries, 31 states, and the District of Columbia now have laws requiring adult drivers and passengers to use seat belts.

Direct observation surveys of seat belt use, if properly designed and conducted, can produce accurate estimates of use. However, observation surveys are expensive to conduct and usually observe only shoulder belt use. Furthermore, although they can estimate a driver's or occupant's age and sex, they cannot gather other information useful in understanding belt use,

*Reprinted from: CDC. MMWR 1988; 37(36):549-51.

**California, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.

⁺Most surveys took place during daylight hours and measured belt use by the driver and right front seat passenger.

such as trip purpose or attitudes about belt use laws. Telephone surveys provide the opportunity to collect these additional data. They may also be less expensive to design and conduct than observation surveys. However, telephone surveys can record only the respondents' stated behavior, not their actual behavior.

Some of the divergence in the data analyzed here may be due to the fact that the self-reported data were collected each month throughout 1987 and thus estimate average belt use throughout the year. The observed data were collected at different times in each state. Furthermore, the self-reported data were drawn from a sample of the entire state while observed data from some states came from only a few sites. The moderate fit of the regression lines means that they are useful in describing general relations between observed and self-reported belt use, but they should not be used to predict observed use in a single state when only one self-reported survey is available.

More studies such as these are needed to establish reliably the relationship between the results from observation surveys and BRFSS telephone surveys. The results from observation surveys could then be used to help interpret the BRFSS responses and translate them into approximate actual belt use levels. The BRFSS data in turn could be used to investigate characteristics of belt users and nonusers that cannot be determined from observation surveys and to provide information on temporal trends without the expense of observation surveys. In these ways, the usefulness of both types of surveys would be enhanced.

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Figure 1.

Comparison of observed and self-reported seat belt use ("always")-- selected states, 1987

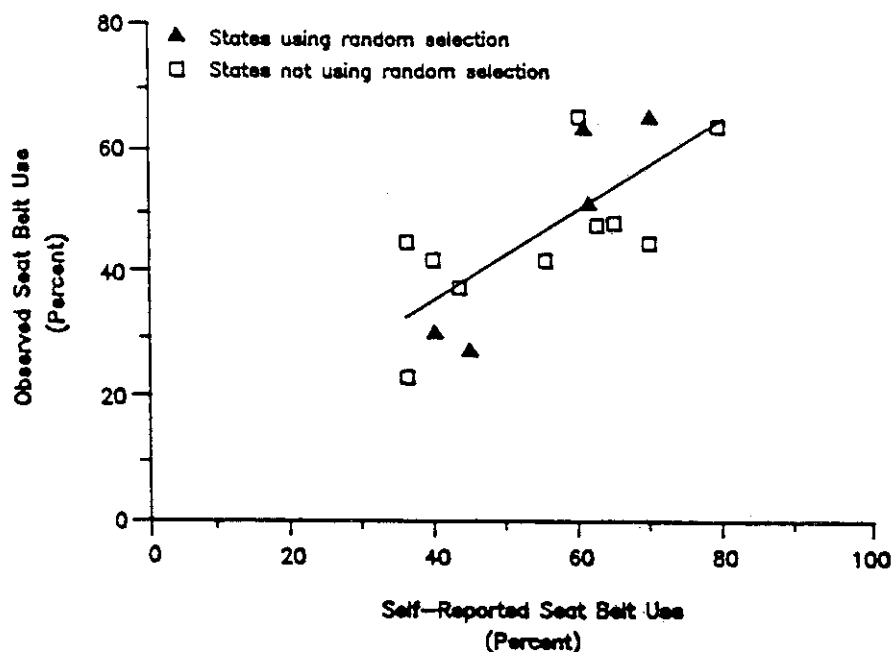
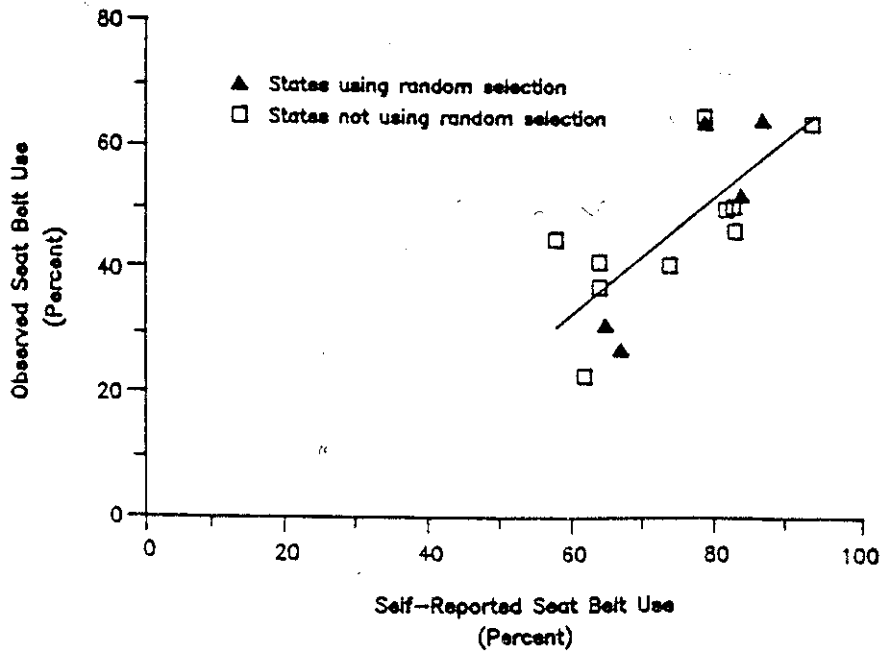


Figure 2.

Comparison of observed and self-reported seat belt use
 ("always" plus "nearly always") -- selected states, 1987



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