

TOO RELAXED FOR A SEATBELT?

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As many motorists set off for various holiday destinations in December, road safety experts can hope, with all the awareness campaigns circulating, that all passengers in vehicles will buckle up. Can we, however, be sure that once motorists safely reach their destinations that they continue the practice? If you drive a kilometer or two to the beach, do you *always* wear your seatbelt?

The managing director of MasterDrive, Eugene Herbert, asks when people are in relaxation mode, with city traffic and long trips behind them, do they sometimes forget or forgo their seatbelts? “The key to safe driving is to never let your guard down. Whether you need to drive 2km down the road or 200km to your destination, your seatbelt is just as important either way.

“To understand why a seatbelt is important, we need to understand the role it plays in a crash. When you collide with something, three impacts take place. The first impact is with the object that you drive into. The second impact is your body colliding with other people or objects in the car. The last impact is your internal organs colliding with other organs in your body. The job of the seatbelt is to prevent you from being flung from the car, being flung into others in the car and to spread the force of stopping suddenly across the sturdier parts of your body.”

Another important part of seatbelt safety this holiday season, is ensuring your child is safely buckled up. “Never allow your children to skip wearing their seatbelt so that they can lie flat across the seat or in the back of a bakkie. Keep an eagle eye on them to ensure that they do not put the top strap behind their bodies to be more comfortable.

“If your child is too old for a car or booster seat there are items you can buy to make a seatbelt more comfortable for them. There is not, however, anything that you can do to protect them should you be in a crash and they are not safely strapped in. Find a way to stress the importance of a seatbelt to you children, especially to older children,” says Herbert.