



The History of SAFE

Crawford County had one of the lowest teen compliance rates for seatbelts in Kansas. In the spring of 2008, law enforcement officers in Crawford County joined together to visit all of the schools in the county. The goal was to spend two weeks educating the students, followed by two weeks of high visibility enforcement. Somewhere along the way, an idea was hatched for a new project to increase compliance.

After some ideas were tossed around, Crawford County Sheriff Sandy Horton took the lead role to bring the idea to fruition. The Crawford County Sheriff's Office, in cooperation with the Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) and Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), developed a pilot project to increase seatbelt compliance among high school students in Crawford County.

The core group met to develop the concept and principles and then contacted schools and local businesses for financial support. The concept developed around two important points; the first being the involvement of students as much as possible, in order for them to develop personal ownership in the program. Law Enforcement most often presents programs that send the message, "If you don't buckle up, you could get a ticket or be killed." The second point of the program was to show students an immediate reward for wearing their seatbelt instead of issuing a threat.

As the program developed, plans were made to bring other law enforcement agencies and businesses on board. One of the criteria for sponsors was that all employees must make the same commitment to seatbelt use as students.

Nominations were made by students as to what name to give the program. Three different slogans were proposed and by a vote, the students selected "Seatbelts Are For Everyone" (SAFE). This acronym, along with the logo, has been adopted by KDOT's Traffic Safety Section as a state-recognized program.

The budget for the first year of the program was in the \$6,300 range. This provided enough money to purchase six \$25 VISA gift cards per school per month and grand prizes. Sponsors included The Crawford County Sheriff's Office (representing all Crawford County law enforcement), the Kansas State Trooper's Association, KDOT'S Traffic Safety Section, Farm Bureau, Labette Bank, and AAA Kansas Traffic Safety Fund.

On September 24, 2008, a meeting was held at the Crawford County Sheriff's Office. Students and administrators from all six schools in Crawford County were present. A final draft of the student-designed pledge card, which recognized each school participating in the S.A.F.E. program, was presented. Discussion and planning between the students and advisors on the educational campaign was underway. A decision was made as to who would be trained for the seatbelt survey.

Survey training was held on October 22, 2008, at the Sheriff's Office in Girard, KS. The training was scheduled for one hour of classroom lecture, followed by one hour of field training.

After the training, students at each school conducted a seatbelt survey to gauge their school's seatbelt compliance. The surveys also generated friendly competition among the schools participating and would be used to determine the final grand prize winner.

In December, after the surveys were completed, school assemblies began. The very first SAFE assembly was held at Pittsburg High and was well-received by students and staff. Following the first assembly, a drawing was held and six \$25 VISA gift cards were awarded to students who had committed to wearing their seatbelt by signing a pledge card.

Each month, students were given the opportunity to sign a pledge card, making them eligible for that month's drawing. Every school received six \$25 VISA gift cards each month. These monthly drawings encouraged participation, kept seatbelt use on the minds of students, and generated media attention.

At the end of the school year, there were two grand prize winning schools. The prizes were awarded to the school that had the highest compliance rate and the school with the most improvement in their compliance. The grand prizes were worth approximately \$2700 total and included one laptop computer and five Ipods for each of the two winning schools. Students' names were drawn to determine winners in each school.

Final surveys were completed by students in mid-April. The two grand prize schools were Southeast, with the highest overall compliance of 94%; and Girard, with the highest compliance increase of 34%.

Survey Results:

<u>School</u>	<u>1st Survey</u>	<u>Final Survey</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Arma	57%	82%	25%
Colgan	80%	82%	2%
Frontenac	70%	81%	11%
Girard	55%	89%	34%
Pittsburg	64%	78%	14%
Southeast	82%	94%	12%
Overall Average Increase			16.3%

With 1,875 students in the county, the seatbelt usage increase of 16.3% meant an additional 306 students were wearing their seatbelt and traveling safer every day.

In April 2009, Sheriff Horton and several students presented the SAFE program and results at a state-wide traffic safety conference in Wichita. The Sheriff and students received a "People Saving People" award for their accomplishments.