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Fatalities Up, Seat Belt Use Down, in NW MO.

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. (AP) - Northwest Missouri has seen a rise in fatality wrecks, and authorities say part of the problem is most of the victims weren't wearing seat belts.

The St. Joseph News-Press reports that a Missouri State Highway Patrol troop that patrols the area reports a 54 percent increase in vehicle fatalities for the year. Sergeant Jacob Angle says he's confident that at least some of the 16 people who died could have been saved if they'd buckled up.

He says drivers are 10 times more likely to survive a crash if they're wearing their seat belts. And he says seat belts reduce the risk of injury by 75 percent.

Statewide, Missouri drivers use seat belts at a rate of about 83 percent. Angle says that's one of the lower rates nationally.

Associated Press