

# Scientists Praise Mayor for Campaign Encouraging Taxicab Passengers to Buckle Up

*By ACSH Staff — August 8, 1997*

Scientists from the New York City Advisory Council on Health Priorities, an affiliate of the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH), applaud Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's campaign to encourage taxicab passengers to buckle up. In an open letter to the mayor, the Advisory Council praises the campaign for mandating the provision of functional accessible seat belts, as well as the newly installed celebrity audio messages reminding patrons to fasten their seat belts in all 12,053 taxicabs licensed in New York City.

According to ACSH President Dr. Elizabeth M. Whelan, "The deaths and injuries attributed to taxicab accidents are highly preventable. They can be avoided by simply buckling up. A few years back it was difficult to even find a seat belt in a cab. We at the ACSH Advisory Council applaud Mayor Giuliani's campaign for addressing such a vital public health issue."

The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles reported that in 1995 alone there were 15,183 taxicabs in New York City involved in accidents, resulting in approximately 11,000 injured occupants.

"But," Dr. Whelan warns, "the public health issue of safety in taxis is far from solved." A passenger who chooses to disregard the buckle-up reminder and continues to ride unrestrained is at risk of sustaining significant injury in an accident by striking the cab's security divider an impact similar to hitting a windshield.

"As public health officials we would like to commend Mayor Giuliani's seat-belt initiative," says Dr. Whelan. "We also ask, however, that the mayor reevaluate the necessity of the bullet-proof divider as a security measure. It appears to serve more as a hazard to passengers than as a deterrent to criminals."

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