



NHTSA

NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

Rural CIOT Concept Testing

February 2024

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Research Design

Purpose & Methodology

Purpose

Evaluate advertising concepts designed to influence young men (18 to 34 years old) in rural areas to wear their seat belts every time they drive or ride in a vehicle by promoting awareness of the costly consequences that go far beyond a ticket.

Research Objectives

1. Evaluate concepts.
2. Identify the most compelling elements.
3. Diagnose potential areas of improvement.
4. Evaluate effectiveness in influencing behavior to wear a seat belt every time while driving.
5. Evaluate effectiveness at communicating that law enforcement enforces seat belt laws because seat belts can save one's life and should be worn to prevent deadly consequences.

Methodology

Focus Groups (8 groups)

- 75-minute groups;
- n=45 participants*

Qualification Criteria

General Market:

- National audience
- Lives in a rural area
- Male
- 18 to 34 years old
- Doesn't wear a seat belt 100% of the time as a driver
- Has a driver's license
- Drives 10 or more miles per week

Concepts Tested & Discussion Flow

Wide Open Spaces

Concept L



Fill in the Blank

Concept P



Bad News

Concept M



Pieces

Concept Q



Worried Sick

Concept O



Warm-Up/Initial Discussion

Evaluation of Individual Concepts

Main Message

Effective Elements

Potential Improvements


Comparison of Concepts

Memorable Elements

Most Influential

Best Communicates Enforcement

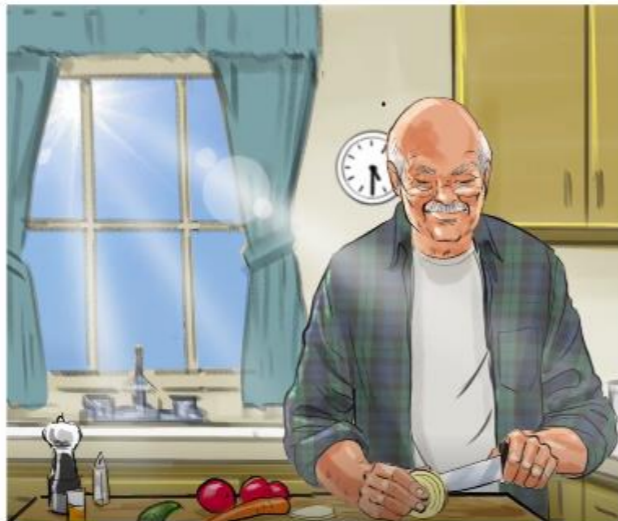
Wrap-Up & Close

A blurred photograph of a city street with cars and buildings, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Concept Evaluation' is centered in white.

Concept Evaluation

Worried Sick

(Concept O)



Worried Sick

(Concept O)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
1 st (n=33)	89% (n=40)



Worried Sick strongly resonates due to the compelling portrayal of how the decision to not wear a seat belt can hurt loved ones. The older man's growing concern and distraught tone on the closing voicemail are especially effective. While a few respondents suggested substituting the older man for a mother or grandmother, most agree the current depiction is equally or more effective than alternatives.

Effective Elements

- Participants almost universally find the concept relatable and emotionally affecting.
- The concept clearly conveys how the decision to not wear a seat belt affects more than just oneself—the person directly hurt in a crash is rarely the only victim.
- The closing voicemail conveys the emotional pain the viewer's family would experience if they were in the older man's situation.

*I would say for me this felt relatable. I could see myself living out this exact scenario of a loved one looking forward to seeing me and counting on me to arrive... **If something were to happen, just how devastated the loved one would be... just how crushed they would be worrying about you. So that just really hit home.***

– Steve, age 27 to 34 years old

Worried Sick

(Concept O)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
1 st (n=33)	89% (n=40)



Worried Sick could benefit from improvements to the sequencing of the second half of the concept and the transition to the crash. Another point of critique centered around the tone of the law enforcement officer in his statement, which some participants found unsympathetic.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Some participants perceive the law enforcement officer as unsympathetic. Consider having the officer communicate the line about the seat belt to another person rather than the camera (e.g., “A seat belt could have made a big difference.”).
- The seat belt messaging could be strengthened by indicating how not wearing a seat belt contributed to the young man’s death. Alternatively, seat belt messaging could be improved by having the officer give some quantification (e.g., “No seat belt; fifth one I’ve seen this month.”).
- The transition from the older man looking out the window to the scene of the crash is abrupt. Consider showing the crash or adding another transition scene, perhaps of the older man calling for the first time and seeing the call go to voicemail.

*It was a bit cliché. The [law enforcement] officer at the end even came off kind of insensitive. I feel like just because someone passes away because they weren’t wearing a seat belt or whatever... **we shouldn’t be taking the humanity out of that.***

– Alexander, age 27 to 34 years old

Pieces

(Concept Q)



Pieces

(Concept Q)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
2 nd (n=5)	76% (n=34)



Pieces effectively communicates how one bad decision can change everything and undo a lifetime of accomplishments. The collage of life moments and milestones resonate with the target audience.

Effective Elements

- The snapshots of life moments effectively build an emotional connection. The different life milestones engage the audience based on where they are in their lives.
- It demonstrates how choosing to not wear a seat belt can have devastating consequences not just for you, but also for your loved ones.

*I like a good storyline with an emotional impact and I feel like this had that. It started off with building up a family and all these good milestones that can happen over your life and [used] upbeat music. And then all of a sudden it switches to distraught music and silence. **That juxtaposition between the first half and the second half really hit home that everything you can build up in our life can just collapse in a split second because you don't wear your seat belt.***

– Patrick, age 18 to 26 years old

Pieces

(Concept Q)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
2 nd (n=5)	76% (n=34)



Though relatable, **Pieces** would be more emotionally impactful if it did more to show the aftermath of the crash and the effect on the family. Some participants say the relationship between seat belt use and the consequence needs to be clarified, as it's not clear how using a seat belt would have changed the outcome.

Opportunities for Improvement

- The emotional impact of the concept would be improved by showing the experience of the man's family following the crash. Consider a snapshot of the family at the hospital or at a funeral.
- The sequencing of the ticketing and crash scenes could be clarified. Additionally, the role of the ticketing scene doesn't clearly contribute to the storyline. Participants wonder if the point is to show that the man obstinately refused to buckle up after receiving a ticket, which eventually led to more severe consequences.
- The seat belt messaging needs to be strengthened. It's unclear if the outcome of the crash would have been different had the man been wearing a seat belt.

[The concept] was too focused on the [law enforcement officer] giving a ticket. It didn't really explain how dangerous not wearing a seat belt is... People are going to watch that and say '[law enforcement] is going to give me a ticket, [but] it's not really dangerous to my health or life,' then they're not going to care to wear a seat belt... Focus on the dangers of driving on the road without a seat belt.

– Adil, age 18 to 26 years old

Bad News

(Concept M)



Bad News

(Concept M)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
3 rd (n=4)	58% (n=26)



Bad News is attention-getting, original and communicates that crash injuries related to seat belt noncompliance are a widespread problem. The concept effectively shows law enforcement presence by spotlighting multiple law enforcement officers' statements to news reporters.

Effective Elements

- Many participants found the news stories realistic and relatable since local channels often report on nearby tragedies or serious traffic incidents.
- Showcasing multiple news reporters communicates the scale of the problem and the interviews with law enforcement officers communicates enforcement.
- Some participants connected with the tagline and the warning that they might become “bad news” themselves if they don’t buckle up.

*It's kind of a novel way to approach the topic. I've never seen an ad for seat belt safety or any safety issues quite like that, but it made sense because you know that it happens, and you know the local news does often at least mention it. **It certainly does in my area... [The concept] really focused on the thing people worry about, which is the loss of life or injury.***

– Alexander, age 27 to 34 years old

Bad News

(Concept M)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
3 rd (n=4)	58% (n=26)



Bad News could be bolstered by focusing in more depth on the incidents. Including imagery of the victim and his family would make the concept more personal and emotionally impactful.

Opportunities for Improvement

- To increase the impact of the seat belt messaging, consider adding a scene where, after the news anchor says, "...and they weren't wearing their seat belt," that same statement gets repeated from all the news sources as the camera zooms out.
- The emotional impact of the news anchor's statement that the victim left behind a family could be increased by giving the victim a name and/or by including a picture of him with his family from before the crash.
- Some participants said the concept would be more effective if it more clearly communicated how the seat belt would have saved the victim's life.

*I think it could be more effective. Instead of a John Doe type deal, they should say his name. It was somebody's loved one, somebody's kid, somebody's father. I feel like it will touch more people if this guy had a name. He wasn't nobody. And this could happen to you... **Give him an actual identity... put his picture up with him and his loved ones.***

– Juan, age 27 to 34 years old

Wide Open Spaces

(Concept L)



CLICK IT. DON'T RISK IT.

Wide Open Spaces

(Concept L)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
4 th (n=2)	47% (n=21)



Wide Open Spaces succeeds at communicating a rural atmosphere through its music and imagery. Many respondents found the seat belt chime in sync with the music attention-getting and effective at communicating the message.

Effective Elements

- The rural atmosphere is broadly recognized and relatable. The rural setting communicates that one needs to buckle up even on seemingly safe, familiar roads.
- The relaxed scenery and music contrast with the suddenness of the crash, effectively showing how an individual's experience can change suddenly on the road.
- Many respondents recognized the seat belt chime and found its inclusion in the music attention-getting, clever and effective.

*[This concept] was a little more fitting for me since I'm in a rural area. I drive primarily in rural areas... **There's a lot of people in rural areas that I know personally that don't ever wear seat belts... I don't wear a seat belt. I only wear it when I get into town because I don't want to get pulled over.***

– James, age 27 to 34 years old

Wide Open Spaces

(Concept L)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
4 th (n=2)	47% (n=21)



Wide Open Spaces does not build a strong enough emotional connection to motivate changed behavior, and the ending does not make a strong enough connection to seat belt usage.

Opportunities for Improvement

- The spot needs to create a stronger emotional connection to the driver. Consider adding some shots of the driver enjoying the relaxing drive and music. This would also be an opportunity to show that his seat belt is not buckled.
- As with other concepts, participants noted that it would be helpful to know exactly how the seat belt would have changed the outcome of the crash.
- Clarify the ending. The current ending does not clearly convey the relationship, if any, between the ticket and crash scenes. Consider only showing the crash.
- A few respondents noted that the seat belt chime seems to increase in intensity or even become a flatline near the end of the animatic. Consider more clearly having the beep transition to a flatline as the crash is shown.

*[The concept] was very basic and it didn't grab my attention. I was paying attention, but I've already forgotten most of it. When you're looking at younger people, their attention span isn't that great... **They're not going to remember it.***

– River, age 18 to 26 years old

Fill in the Blank

(Concept P)



CLICK IT. DON'T RISK IT.

Fill in the Blank

(Concept P)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
5 th (n=1)	36% (n=16)



Fill in the Blank takes an original approach to communicating the range of risks associated with not buckling up. The concept is effective at grabbing attention and communicates a range of both enforcement and physical consequences for not using a seat belt.

Effective Elements

- The fast pace and loud music are attention-getting.
- The spot shows a range of enforcement and safety consequences that can result from not buckling up.
- The concept uses relatable imagery of family and traffic scenarios to tell the story. The inclusion of the family creates some emotional connection to the protagonist.

*I did like the family part where it said, 'Lose It,' and showed the wife and kids... I don't have kids, but when I do have kids, obviously I'd be like '**Dang, maybe I should wear my seat belt.**'*

– Kyler, age 18 to 26 years old

Fill in the Blank

(Concept P)

Ability to Influence Behavior Rank:	Graded the Concept A/B:
5 th (n=1)	36% (n=16)



While *Fill in the Blank* effectively captures viewers' attention, it struggles to build an emotional connection, and the intensity of the music detracts from the ability of the concept to influence behavior. The concept is perceived as busy and difficult to follow, which loses viewers' attention.

Opportunities for Improvement

- The spot needs a clearer story to be effective. The pace moves too quickly for many viewers to build an emotional connection.
- Many participants did not like the drum music. Typical critiques included it being too loud and upbeat for the concept. Some found the sound stressful or distracting.
- The text style is difficult for some participants to read, and the chosen words don't always communicate the message effectively.

It was an interesting style and I felt like it was a more modern way of advertising versus the more traditional storyline. I did feel like it was a little bit chaotic. The overall message was hard to really grasp. I thought the music was fun and interesting, but a little bit loud and distracting. It was cool, but [not the best in] overall effectiveness.






– Marc, age 18 to 26 years old

Concept Comparisons

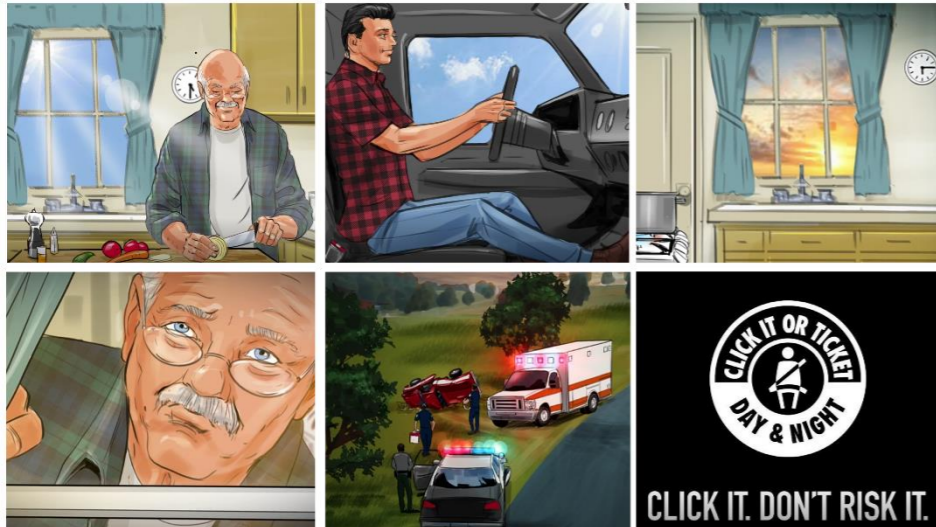
Concept Comparison

General Market

Concept O leads by a wide margin on concept grades and ability to influence behavior. Concept M communicates enforcement, but earns mediocre grades and does not effectively influence behavior.

Concept Assessment	Influences Behavior Select one concept	Concept Grades Graded A/B	Communicates Enforcement Select one concept
 <p>Worried Sick (Concept O)</p>	73% (33/45)	89% (40/45)	11% (5/45)
 <p>Pieces (Concept Q)</p>	11% (5/45)	76% (34/45)	11% (5/45)
 <p>Bad News (Concept M)</p>	9% (4/45)	58% (26/45)	38% (17/45)
 <p>Wide Open Roads (Concept L)</p>	4% (2/45)	47% (21/45)	11% (5/45)
 <p>Fill in the Blank (Concept P)</p>	2% (1/45)	36% (16/45)	29% (13/45)

Recommendation



Worried Sick

Based on high concept grades and a significantly stronger ability to influence behavior, we recommend moving forward with *Worried Sick*.

While two other concepts—*Bad News* and *Fill in the Blank*—did more to communicate enforcement, *Worried Sick* is much more effective at influencing behavior than either of these concepts and received much higher concept grades.

Improvements—*Worried Sick*

1. Some participants perceive the law enforcement officer as unsympathetic. Consider having the officer communicate the line about the seat belt to another person rather than the camera (e.g., “A seat belt could have made a big difference.”).
2. The seat belt messaging could be strengthened by indicating how not wearing a seat belt contributed to the young man’s death. Alternatively, seat belt messaging could be improved by having the officer give some quantification (e.g., “No seat belt; fifth one I’ve seen this month.”).
3. The transition from the older man looking out the window to the scene of the crash is abrupt. Consider showing the crash or adding another transition scene, perhaps of the older man calling for the first time and seeing the call go to voicemail.

Appendix

General Market (n=45)

Demographics

Category	Demographic	Total
Age	18 to 26 years old	49% (n=22)
	27 to 34 years old	51% (n=23)
Ethnicity	White	64% (n=29)
	Black	11% (n=5)
	Hispanic	11% (n=5)
	Asian	4% (n=2)
	Other	9% (n=4)
Education	High school or less	11% (n=5)
	Some college/vocational/tech	47% (n=21)
	College graduate	38% (n=17)
	Postgraduate	4% (n=2)
Household Income	Less Than \$50K	47% (n=21)
	\$50k-\$99k	31% (n=14)
	\$100k+	22% (n=10)
4 Point Census Region	Northeast	22% (n=10)
	Midwest	22% (n=10)
	South	42% (n=19)
	West	13% (n=6)
Employment	Employed	78% (n=35)
	Student	20% (n=9)
	Unemployed	2% (n=1)
Seat Belt Use	0%	2% (n=1)
	1%-9%	2% (n=1)
	10%-19%	7% (n=3)
	20%-29%	2% (n=1)
	30%-39%	4% (n=2)
	40%-49%	7% (n=3)
	50%-59%	9% (n=4)
	60%-69%	2% (n=1)
	70%-79%	22% (n=10)
	80%-89%	27% (n=12)
	90%-99%	16% (n=7)
100%	-	