



NEWS RELEASE

Christine Krueger, Director of Communications

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CONTACT:

Nathan Bowie, 651-201-7571

PROM SEASON TRAFFIC DEATHS SHOW POOR SEAT BELT USE, SIGNIFICANT ALCOHOL USE AMONG TEENS

Severe Consequences for Underage Drinking and to Parents Providing Alcohol

ST. PAUL — Public safety officials urge parents to remind their prom-bound teens to practice safe seat belt use and to obey underage drinking laws.

In Minnesota 2003–2005, there were 163 teenage vehicle occupant traffic deaths (15–18 year olds) of which about 60 percent were not belted. However, for the same three years during the April–June prom and end-of-school season, 36 teens were killed and 72 percent were not belted — reflecting a significantly lower belt use rate. In addition, 37 percent of the teens killed during this period had been drinking. Last spring, three teens died in a traffic crash near Fosston, Minnesota, on prom night.

“Prom season and ‘senioritis’ attitudes among teen drivers makes this time of year very dangerous on Minnesota roads,” says Kathy Swanson, director of the Office of Traffic Safety. “Parents, and most importantly teens, need to make sure every one is belted, no one drives impaired and that distractions are limited behind the wheel.”

Driving minors cited for any amount of alcohol use can lose their license from 30 to 180 days, face up to a \$700 fine and 90 days in jail. Minors can lose their license until age 18 if they are arrested for DWI or involved in an impaired driving crash or crime. Trying to purchase alcohol with a fake ID can result in a loss of driving privileges for at least 90 days.

Adults are also subject to serious criminal and legal consequences for providing alcohol to minors. If an adult provides alcohol to a minor and that person is killed or injured, or injures or kills another motorist in a crash, the adult can be charged with a felony and face time in prison.

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Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement

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