



NEWS RELEASE

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MINNESOTA PASSES 400 TRAFFIC FATALITY MARK

Public Safety Officials Urge Caution as Recent Progress Halted

ST. PAUL — Traffic crashes have claimed 403 lives year-to-date in Minnesota, according to preliminary reports submitted to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS). While the state recorded its 400th fatality on Monday, DPS officials note that last year the four-century mark was reached on November 13. At this time last year, there were a preliminary number of 379 traffic deaths recorded.

The pace of fatalities is poised to exceed last year's 494 road deaths which was the first year since 1945 to total less than 500. The number of traffic fatalities dropped consecutively the last three years, from 655 in 2003 to 494 last year — a nearly 25 percent reduction.

“After three successive years of fewer deaths, we're disappointed and very concerned,” says Cheri Marti, director of DPS Office of Traffic Safety. “All Minnesotans are impacted by these deaths, and each has a role and responsibilities in reducing preventable deaths — buckle up, drive sober, heed posted speed limits, and pay attention.”

Marti underscores the importance of local law enforcement agencies as well as community-based efforts in reversing the tide of increased traffic deaths. The state's *Toward Zero Deaths* program has a goal of 400 or fewer fatalities by 2010.

DPS officials state those most at-risk, are teen and young adults, especially males, and those living in rural areas. As the number of deaths is based on reports submitted by law enforcement agencies from across the state, the preliminary number often lags behind the actual number of deaths and is expected to increase.

Despite the overall increase in traffic deaths, some categories are down slightly. According to reports, the number of deaths of motorcycle riders, pedestrians and bicyclists are all down in 2007 compared to last year at this time: 54 compared to 61; 24 compared to 28; and three compared to six, respectively. Twelve of the 13 persons killed in the I-35 bridge collapse are considered traffic deaths.

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