



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 3, 2009

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JANUARY TRAFFIC DEATHS: SEVEN MOTORISTS KILLED — SIX NOT WEARING SEAT BELTS

ST. PAUL — Traffic safety officials are underscoring the importance of seat belt use, following a high percentage of unbelted vehicle occupant deaths in January. Last month, six of seven vehicle occupants killed in Minnesota were not buckled up — and four of those killed were ejected from their vehicle. The data comes from State Patrol preliminary reports in which belt use was indicated.

Each year in Minnesota, unbelted motorists account for around 200 traffic deaths, representing 55 percent of all motorist deaths. During 2005–2007, there were 614 unbelted vehicle occupant deaths and 1,298 serious injuries.

These unbelted fatal crashes remain under investigation by the State Patrol:

Jan. 4 at 12:11 p.m., Hwy. 52 in Dakota County — Michael Hoeft, 19, of Inver Grove Heights, Minn., was the passenger in a vehicle that hit a patch of ice causing the driver to lose control and the car to roll. Hoeft was ejected and killed.

Jan. 9 at 10:34 p.m., Hwy. 107 in Kanabec County — Allen Kelling, 19, of Braham, Minn., was the driver of a vehicle that was broadsided. Kelling was unbelted and died from the injuries he sustained in the crash.

Jan. 15 at 6:39 a.m., I-94 in Wright County — Jacob Jaeckels, 21, of Clear Lake, Minn., lost control of his vehicle, causing it to roll. Jaeckels was ejected and killed.

Jan. 15 at 8:35 p.m., Hwy. 61 in Dakota County — Gerald Hauwiller, 43, of Welsh, Minn., was the passenger in a pickup truck that hit a patch of ice, causing the driver to lose control, the truck was then broadsided by another vehicle. Hauwiller was unbelted and was killed.

Jan. 17 at 8:26 a.m., Hwy. 52 in Goodhue County — Justin Riess, 19, of Pine Island, Minn., was the passenger in a vehicle that hit a patch of ice causing the driver to lose control and the car to roll. Riess was ejected and killed.

Jan. 22 at 6:16 a.m., Hwy. 32 in Polk County — Allen Solie, 43, of Crookston, Minn., failed to stop at a stop sign and broadsided an oncoming semi truck. Solie was ejected and killed.

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