



NEWS RELEASE

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MINNESOTA HITS 100 ROAD DEATHS FOR THE YEAR

Nine Deaths in the Last Week Pushes State Over Milestone

ST. PAUL — More than 100 people have been killed in traffic crashes on Minnesota roads so far in 2011. The preliminary count of 102 is 23 percent below the pace of 2010, according to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Traffic Safety.

The state topped 100 deaths after a deadly week (May 17–23) that included at least nine traffic deaths.

At this rate, DPS projects 375 deaths for 2011. In both 2009 and 2010, the state reached the 100-death mark in late April. There were 421 deaths in 2009; 2010 numbers will be announced in June.

DPS officials say there are many contributing factors to the safer start in 2011, including higher gas prices and inclement weather — resulting in slower, safer speeds and a late start for motorcyclists. Preliminary April deaths were also significantly lower — 23 in 2011 compared to 43 in 2010.

Officials also note the trend of fewer road deaths in recent years has been driven by positive driver behavior and supported by important legislation and proactive efforts — increased enforcement and education, engineering improvements, and efficient trauma response, especially in rural areas.

Despite the success, State Patrol Lt. Eric Roeske, says the speeding, distracted and impaired driving behavior typical during the upcoming summer driving season can cause a spike in road fatalities.

“Memorial Day weekend is historically the launching point into the deadly summer driving season,” says Roeske. “As warm weather and bicycle and motorcycle traffic returns, everyone needs to be attentive to create safer roads, and motorists must be buckled up.”

All Minnesota traffic safety efforts are components of *Toward Zero Deaths (TZD)*, the state’s primary road safety initiative that is a partnership between DPS, MnDOT, Department of Health, the University of Minnesota and others. A primary vision of the *TZD* program is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe and smart driving behavior. *TZD* focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes — education, enforcement, engineering and emergency trauma response.

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