



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 2, 2008

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### MINNESOTA TRAFFIC DEATHS TOP 500 IN 2007

ST. PAUL — Preliminary traffic death figures for 2007 reflect the first increase in fatalities since 2002, according to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). The 2007 preliminary death total is 503, compared to the 2006 preliminary count of 475 and the final 2006 total of 494 — the lowest death total since 1945. The 2007 death count will rise as more fatal reports are received by the state.

The preliminary 2007 total reflects vehicle occupants (396), motorcyclists (57), pedestrians (31), snowmobilers (5), farm tractor occupants (4), bicyclists (3), motor scooter/moped operators (3), ATV operators (2), and school passenger van occupants (2). The count includes 12 of the 13 I-35W bridge collapse victims and six motorists killed on roads during the southeastern floods. Specific crash data regarding alcohol-related deaths and seat belt use will be reported later this year.

Distraction, impaired driving, seat belt non-use and speeding are expected to be primary contributing factors of the 2007 fatal crashes according to Cheri Marti, director of OTS. Marti says many crash victims will be young motorists. “Young males are most likely to engage in unsafe driving behaviors and as a result, they are most often killed,” says Marti. “Every motorist has a role in preventing traffic deaths by being responsible for their behavior behind the wheel.”

Several statewide enforcement efforts in 2007 yielded dramatic results. Seat belt enforcement campaigns in May and October resulted in more than 13,800 belt citations. A statewide July speed enforcement campaign generated 34,000 speed citations. A three-week August DWI enforcement resulted in 2,247 DWI arrests. NightCAP, patrols that target the 13 deadliest counties for impaired driving, netted more than 2,500 DWIs. A statewide, year-long speed patrol campaign resulted in an anticipated 16,000 speed citations.

Minnesota’s seat belt use rate increased from 83 percent to a record-high 87 percent in 2007. Researchers suspect the increase may have been influenced by media coverage of the I-35W bridge collapse in which survivors credited seat belts for saving their lives.

The state’s traffic safety efforts are anchored by the *Toward Zero Deaths* (TZD) program. TZD combines the resources of state and local agencies, county engineers and community organizations to address traffic safety issues through enforcement, engineering, education, and emergency trauma care. The goal of TZD is 400 or fewer fatalities by 2010.

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Traffic Safety

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and  
Pipeline Safety