



NEWS RELEASE

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STATE ROAD DEATH COUNT HITS 400 FOR THE YEAR

ST. PAUL — Minnesota’s preliminary year-to-date traffic fatalities topped 400 deaths this week. The milestone reinforces the importance of a statewide, December-long DWI enforcement effort to prevent a potential spike in alcohol-related fatalities, according to Department of Public Safety (DPS) officials. To-date, the state has recorded 401 traffic deaths. DPS projects 450 deaths for the year, or an average of around nine traffic fatalities per week. In 2007, 510 people were killed in traffic crashes in Minnesota.

The preliminary death count includes 12 bicyclists, 65 motorcyclists and 26 pedestrians. DPS reported a total of four bicyclists, 61 motorcyclists and 33 pedestrians killed in 2007.

DPS officials say driver behavior is the key in preventing road deaths. Officials note a solid seat belt use rate of 87 percent, as well as targeted impaired and aggressive driving patrols, road safety improvements, and emergency medical services efforts are contributing to the lower death count.

Around 400 law enforcement agencies will ramp up DWI patrols in December. In the last three Decembers, 2005–2007, 41 motorists were killed in alcohol-related crashes and another 10,553 were arrested for DWI. Each year, alcohol-related crashes account for around 200 deaths.

“Our goal is to make Minnesota roads safer during December by targeting impaired driving,” says Lt. Mark Peterson of the State Patrol. “Motorists must keep safe driving a priority over the rush to and from holiday activities and events.”

The state recorded 100 road deaths in late April, 200 in early July, and 300 in mid-September.

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- Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement
- Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
- Driver and Vehicle Services
- Emergency Communication Networks
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Minnesota State Patrol
- Office of Communications
- Office of Justice Programs
- Office of Traffic Safety
- State Fire Marshal