



NEWS RELEASE

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DEADLY 2009 MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND AN ALERT FOR MOTORISTS

ST. PAUL — Last year, Memorial Day weekend was one of the deadliest on Minnesota roads with 13 traffic fatalities — nine were vehicle occupants and six were unbelted. With that stark reminder and a current enhanced seat belt enforcement effort as a backdrop, the Department of Public Safety (DPS) urges motorists to buckle and pay attention during the high-traffic holiday period and into the summer.

“Memorial Day leads into the deadly summer driving season when motorists increase speeds and impaired driving spikes,” says Cheri Marti, DPS Office of Traffic Safety director. “Blue skies and clear roads don’t mean drivers should let down their guard.”

Marti adds these safety tips for the Memorial Day travel period:

- **Buckle up** — About 400 enforcement agencies are now participating in the *Click It or Ticket* seat belt enforcement effort. Seat belts are the most effective way to prevent injury or death in a crash.
- **Pay attention** — Memorial Day weekend is a high-traffic period and the beginning of the summer driving season. Motorists need to limit distractions and remember that texting and driving is illegal in Minnesota. Motorists must be alert for motorcyclists, and look twice for riders when turning and at intersections.
- **Drive at safe speeds** — Clear skies and dry roads often lead to higher speeds, and as a result, more violent crashes. The posted speed is the speed limit. Leave enough travel time in advance to avoid the urge to speed to your destination. Enhanced speed enforcement is running summer-long.
- **Never drink and drive** — If you plan on drinking, plan on a safe and sober ride.
- **See orange** — While most road construction projects will shut down for the holiday, motorists will encounter detours and traffic restrictions, as well as rough road surfaces and narrowed lanes. Motorists must use caution in construction areas and move over a lane for emergency responders on the shoulders of roads. Fines are doubled in the work zone. Call 511 or visit www.511mn.org for traffic, construction, weather and travel information.

“As we move into the summer months, new projects will begin and the number of work zones across the state will increase,” says Sue Mulvihill, MnDOT operations director. “It’s important that motorists plan trips in advance, drive carefully and pay attention to avoid preventable crashes.”



Editor’s note: For weekend interview opportunities about safe Memorial Day travel contact State Patrol Lt. Eric Roeske, 651-492-9751.

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