



NEWS RELEASE

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STATE ON PACE FOR LOWEST TRAFFIC FATALITIES SINCE 1944

Weekend Crashes Push 2010 Road Death Count Over 200

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Traffic Safety reports the state is on pace to have the lowest number of traffic deaths since 1944, despite at least three weekend deaths that pushed the 2010 total over the 200-death milestone. As of July 19, the state's preliminary traffic death count is 204, compared to 214 at this time last year. The state hit the 100 death-mark in late April.

DPS projects 400 deaths for the year, a figure that would meet the goal of the state's core traffic safety initiative, *Toward Zero Deaths (TZD)*, of 400 or fewer deaths for 2010. There were 421 deaths in 2009.

Traffic Safety officials say enforcement of seat belt use as well as aggressive and impaired driving patrols coupled with educational outreach have factored in the lower death count. DPS also cites continued MnDOT engineering improvements and efficient emergency response to crashes are contributing to the lower death count — all elements of the *TZD* program.

"Minnesota has achieved real progress in recent years in limiting road deaths, and we are on pace to continue this trend," says Cheri Marti, director of DPS Office of Traffic Safety. "We call on all motorists to exercise safe driver behavior to stop preventable deaths."

The 204 traffic deaths for 2010 include — 15 motorcyclists, the same count with this time in 2009; 19 pedestrians, up from 15 at this time last year; and five bicyclists, level with the 2009 count at this time.

Officials say summer is a critical time for motorists to watch for motorcyclists, pedestrians and bicyclists, and offer these tips:

Pedestrians — Motorists must yield for crossing pedestrians at all marked and unmarked crosswalks and intersections; and pedestrians must obey traffic control devices. Motorists need to anticipate pedestrians crossing both at crosswalks and crossing illegally.

Motorcyclists — Ridership is at an all-time high in the state. Motorists should look twice for motorcycles before turning or changing lanes and allow plenty of room. Riders should wear high-visibility protective gear to stand out in traffic. Riders of all experience levels are encouraged to take a training course once every four years; for more information, visit www.motorcyclesafety.state.mn.us.

Bicyclists — Bike riders should wear helmets and bright, reflective clothing, and lights at night. Riders must obey traffic signals. Motorists must share the road with bikes and drive alert for riders.

TZD focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes — education, enforcement, engineering and emergency trauma response. *TZD* is a partnership led by the departments of Public Safety, Transportation and Health, in cooperation with state and local law enforcement, Minnesota County Engineers Association, and the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota.

Driving Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths.

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