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NEWS RELEASE

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**47 Cited for Seat Belt Violations During First Week of Mobilization
to Get Delawareans Buckled Up**
Public awareness efforts begin this week

Dover – Buckle Up Day & Night! That’s the message many will start seeing this week on billboards and in print ads that are aimed at encouraging more Delawareans to wear their seat belts. The awareness efforts follow the first week of statewide seat belt enforcement in which officers issued 47 citations for violations of Delaware’s seat belt law.

It’s all part of a four-month long safety initiative focused on saving lives by increasing seat belt use in the First State. The enforcement and awareness mobilization is being coordinated by the Delaware Office of Highway Safety. A plan was created after results from observational seat belt surveys conducted in June revealed that the state’s 2009 statewide use rate declined from 91% last year to 88% this year. Adding to safety officials’ concerns is the fact that an overwhelming 65% of drivers and passengers killed since January 1st have not been buckled up.

As part of the mobilization, which launched August 1st, eight county and municipal police agencies will conduct either traffic safety patrols and/or checkpoints looking for unbuckled drivers and passengers. The sustained enforcement effort will continue through the end of November, purposely including the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

In addition to the 47 seat belt citations issued last week, officers cited 4 drivers for failing to properly restrain the children with them, cited 13 for speeding violations and cited another 67 for other traffic violations. Drivers who don’t wear seat belts are also more likely to exhibit other risky behaviors like driving aggressively or while impaired by drugs and/or alcohol.

Delaware law requires drivers and *all* passengers, including those in the back seat, to wear a seat belt. An officer can pull over a driver if he sees any person not wearing one.

Delaware's law also requires correct use of the seat belt...which means the shoulder belt must be worn over the shoulder and not under the arm. Officers will be issuing citations for seat belt violations as part of a zero tolerance policy. The ticket, which goes to the driver no matter who is unbuckled in the vehicle, is a \$25.00 fine plus court administrative fees, which can eventually total more than \$70.00.

Participating agencies include: Bridgeville Police, Harrington Police, Laurel Police, Milford Police, Millsboro Police, New Castle County Police, Ocean View Police, and Seaford Police/ Seat belt usage declined by 4% each in New Castle and Sussex Counties, while the usage rate actually increased by 1% in Kent County.

For weekly updates on OHS's seat belt mobilization results please visit the Newsroom on the OHS website at www.ohs.delaware.gov . While there, bookmark the site in your RSS Reader. You can also follow OHS updates on our activities on Twitter at www.twitter.com/DEHighwaySafe .

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