



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY**  
P.O. BOX 1321  
DOVER, DELAWARE 19903-1321  
302-672-7642  
[www.ohs.delaware.gov](http://www.ohs.delaware.gov)

**NEWS RELEASE**

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CONTACT: Andrea Summers  
Community Relations Officer  
672-7642 (w) 943-7293 (c)

## **Governor Asks Drivers to Make Traffic Safety A Statewide Priority for Memorial Day Weekend**

*It's Delaware's deadliest holiday weekend – enforcement scheduled statewide*

**Dover -** The Memorial Day weekend is consistently the most deadly of any holiday weekend during the year in Delaware. Over the last five years, 13 people have been killed and another 407 injured in motor vehicle crashes during Memorial Day weekend. In an effort to prevent additional loss of life, Governor Jack Markell is asking motorists to make safe driving a priority.

“Memorial Day Weekend should be about honoring the service of our men and women protecting our country in the military and spending time with friends and family,” Gov. Markell said. “It is also a time when a lot of people are traveling on our roads. I am encouraging all drivers to be safe and alert at all times when behind the wheel so that Delawareans and the many visitors to our state remain safe and enjoy the traditional kick off of summer.”

Law enforcement agencies statewide will be out in force throughout the holiday weekend to make sure drivers are obeying the law. Delaware State Police Colonel Thomas F. Mac Leish says, “With Memorial Day coming up, Troopers will be out in force, doing their best to keep our highways safe. Officers from various units within DSP will be reassigned this holiday weekend to increase visibility on our roadways. Those who are observed driving recklessly, speeding and creating hazardous conditions for other drivers should expect to be ticketed.” Speed is listed as a factor in 41% of fatal crashes which have occurred so far this year.

Throughout the weekend, officers from 30 State, County and Municipal police agencies will also be focusing on stopping unbelted individuals as the 2009 Click It or Ticket campaign continues. Four checkpoints and well over 100 patrols are scheduled to occur both day and night through Memorial Day.

“Sadly, crashes will occur this weekend, but you can improve your chance of surviving one by up to 50% simply by buckling up,” said Tricia Roberts, Director of the Office of Highway Safety. Officers conducting overtime seat belt enforcement activities will also be on the lookout for impaired and aggressive drivers. During the first week of Click It or Ticket enforcement activities, while officers issued 905 citations for seat belt violations, they also arrested 7 individuals for DUI, and issued 204 citations to speeding drivers. Three of the citations were for speeds in excess of 80 mph.

Since January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, 35 people have been killed in Delaware traffic crashes...a 17% decrease from this time last year in 2008. Currently 21% of fatal traffic crashes this year have been alcohol-related, while 72% are attributed to acts of aggressive driving with speed being the leading aggressive driving behavior. Of the drivers and passengers killed this year in fatal crashes, 69% of them have not been wearing seat belts, and more than a quarter of those individuals were ejected from the vehicle where a person’s chances of being killed are four times higher.

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