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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lack of Seat Belt Use Remains an Issue as Officers Cite 70 More for Violations

Dover – Officers participating in a stepped up statewide enforcement effort to save lives by getting more Delawareans to buckle up, issued 70 citations for seat belt violations between September 28th and October 4th. This brings the total number of seat belt citations issued in the first nine weeks of the campaign to 501.

The enforcement and awareness mobilization, which launched August 1st, is part of a four-month long safety initiative created after results from observational seat belt surveys conducted by the Office of Highway Safety in June revealed that the state's 2009 statewide use rate declined from 91% last year to 88% this year. To date this year, 57% of drivers and passengers killed since January 1st have not been buckled up.

Eight county and municipal police agencies, primarily located in Sussex and New Castle Counties, are conducting either traffic safety patrols and/or checkpoints looking for unbuckled drivers and passengers. 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.

In addition to the seat belt citations issued in the last week, officers also issued 6 citations for violations of Delaware's child restraint law, cited 28 for speeding, arrested 1 for DUI, 2 for drug violations, apprehended 2 wanted individuals and cited another 63 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.

Enforcement is occurring both day and night and will continue through the end of November, including the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

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.

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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