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NEWS RELEASE

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Seat Belt Enforcement Effort Moves Into Week 3

Dover – Officers participating in a stepped up enforcement effort to save lives by getting more Delawareans to buckle up, have issued 51 citations for seat belt violations in the last week. This brings the total number of seat belt citations issued in the first three weeks of the campaign to 173.

In addition to the seat belt citations issued from August 17 - 23, officers also issued 1 citation for violations of Delaware's child restraint law, cited 31 for speeding, and cited another 45 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.

The enforcement and awareness mobilization 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. Additionally, 66% of drivers and passengers killed since January 1st of this year have not been buckled up.

As part of the mobilization eight county and municipal police agencies, primarily in Sussex and New Castle County, are conducting either traffic safety patrols and/or checkpoints looking for unbuckled drivers and passengers. Enforcement is occurring both day and night and will continue through the end of November, purposely 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.

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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