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**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Aggressive Drivers Beware – OHS Issues *Summer HEAT* Traffic Advisory as Enforcement Campaign Begins Today**

*Dover* – Starting today, Office of Highway Safety officials report that they’re now “turning up the *HEAT*” on Aggressive Drivers with the launch of the 2006 “Stop Aggressive Driving” campaign. Already this year, aggressive driving behaviors are responsible for 56% (35) of Delaware’s 63 fatal crashes. Over the last decade, this percentage has ranged annually from a low of 38% in 2000 to a high of 58% in 2005.

OHS’s announcement that it’s moving into the third phase of the “120 Days of Summer HEAT” initiative, comes less than a week after the kickoff for the 2006 *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign aimed at arresting alcohol and drug impaired drivers. “120 Days of Summer HEAT” is a four month long enforcement and awareness initiative aimed at cracking down on violators of Delaware’s traffic laws. It encompasses Delaware’s three main summertime safety programs including “*Click It or Ticket*”, *Checkpoint Strikeforce*, and the “*Stop Aggressive Driving*” campaign.

2005 was the first year for the “Stop Aggressive Driving” campaign, which resulted in over 6-thousand citations for aggressive driving behaviors in a six-month period.

“Aggressive driving is a huge threat to the safety of motorists on our roadways and we are using a very targeted and comprehensive strategy to impact this problem,” said Tricia Roberts, Director of the Office of Highway Safety.

That strategy includes a combination of high visibility enforcement and a targeted public awareness campaign. The “Stop Aggressive Driving” campaign will again run for six months. In all, nine State and local police agencies with high crash locations in their jurisdictions that are statistically identified as being aggressive driving related, have been provided with federal grant

funding to conduct overtime patrols targeting aggressive drivers. The agencies include Delaware State Police, Dover Police, Elsmere Police, Milford Police, New Castle City Police, New Castle County Police, Newark Police, Newport Police and Wilmington Police.

Much of the campaign's enforcement activities will occur in New Castle County where the majority of aggressive driving-related crashes occur. Again this year, "Aggressive Driving Teams" will be used by Delaware State Police, New Castle County Police and Wilmington Police to catch aggressive drivers. The Teams consist of two officers each, one using a marked vehicle and one operating an unconventional vehicle. When a violation is spotted by an officer in the unconventional vehicle, he or she will radio ahead to their partner in the marked car, and both will then execute the traffic stop and issue the citation. The Team approach will be supplemented by more traditional aggressive driving patrols from four other New Castle County Police agencies

One new facet of this year's campaign is that participating police agencies will also be on the lookout for aggressive driving behaviors by motorcyclists. Aggressive driving behaviors were a factor in 68% of the 22 fatal motorcycle crashes that occurred last year.

Aggressive driving enforcement will be supported by radio, print, and billboard ads designed to reach the most frequent offenders, young adult males 16 – 19 years old. The media campaign is also paid for through federal grant funds.

Individuals who are stopped under Delaware's aggressive driving law can be charged both with aggressive driving and charged for each individual traffic offense. These offenses include speeding, failure to yield the right-of-way, running stop signs and red lights and following too closely. Penalties include fines between \$100 - \$300 for a first offense, possible jail time, and mandatory attendance at an 8-hour behavior modification course. Subsequent convictions will result in the loss of driving privileges for one month. Delaware is one of only 11 states with a specific aggressive driving law.

Aggressive driving is different from road rage, which involves violent driving behavior including running another individual off the road, or threatening them with weapons.

Motorists who witness an aggressive driver are encouraged to call 9 -1-1 as soon as it's safe to do so, and provide the following information to dispatchers: make, model and color of the vehicle, direction of travel, and license plate information if possible.

For more information on aggressive driving, visit the Office of Highway Safety website at [www.state.de.us/highway](http://www.state.de.us/highway).