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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2007

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Delaware Law Enforcement Shares Top 10 Excuses Heard for Not Wearing A Seat Belt

Dover – Although seat belt use is mandatory for every person in the vehicle under Delaware law (yes even for those passengers in the back seat) law enforcement officers often hear a variety of excuses when they pull over a vehicle because either the driver or passenger is not wearing one. The Office of Highway Safety polled Delaware’s law enforcement agencies to find out the most frequent, or most creative, excuses they’d been given. Special thanks to Dover Police, Delaware State Police Troop 3 and Newark Police for their feedback.

- 1) I am afraid of getting stuck in a crashed car – If you are not buckled up when the wreck occurs, you are more likely to be killed or knocked unconscious, and therefore will be unable to get out of the car at all. When you are buckled up, you are more likely to remain in place, in control of the vehicle and conscious to make smart decisions.
- 2) It irritates the skin on my neck or chest – most newer vehicles have adjustable shoulder height positioners that allow occupants to move the shoulder belt height up or down for a more comfortable fit; for older vehicles, occupants may consider wearing clothes with a higher neck to provide some extra padding if this is a big concern for you
- 3) It makes me feel restrained – that’s the function of a seat belt; in a crash it keeps you in your seat so you’re unable to be thrown around or out of the vehicle where you’re four times more likely to be killed than if you remain the car. All driver’s side seat belts allow free movement of the occupant until a crash occurs (or in some instances until you jam on your breaks!)

- 4) I am too big to wear a seat belt, it doesn't fit – For some individuals, purchasing a seat belt extender may work to solve this issue.
- 5) I can't look over my shoulder before turns – Yes you can. A seat belt doesn't restrain your head, it restrains your chest
- 6) I forgot – This is a common excuse, and is why most vehicles have annoying seat belt reminder systems that beep every minute or so when the vehicle senses that the restraint system isn't in use.
- 7) Nobody tells me what to do in my car – Every state has a variety of traffic laws that mandate what people can or cannot do. For instance, it is illegal to drink & drive, it is illegal to speed, and it is illegal to drive or ride without a seat belt.
- 8) I have an air bag, I don't need a seat belt – Air bags are Supplemental Restraint Systems, meaning they are designed to work in conjunction with seat belts not as a restraint system alone. Air bags are not soft cushy pillows. They deploy at approximately 250 miles an hour (the blink of an eye), and begin to deflate immediately after deployment. If you are not restrained by your seat belt, you will go into the air bag, and since it starts to deflate immediately, you will quickly go into the steering column or through the windshield.
- 9) I can't wear a seat belt because I can't feed my baby with it on – If you're driving, your eyes should be focused forward. If you're trying to feed your baby in the backseat, you can't possibly be focusing your attention on the road and you are risking both of your lives. If you're a passenger and need to feed your child a bottle, you should sit in the back seat with the child, and both of you should be properly restrained. Nursing mothers should never try to feed their child while the vehicle is moving. You never know when someone may hit your vehicle and the laws of physics will make it impossible for you to hold onto your child in a crash. Please pull over to a safe location to nurse your child.
- 10) I have a medical condition, I can't wear it – This can be a valid excuse but only if a doctor provides you with a written medical note. If this is the case, make sure to carry it in your purse or wallet so that the doctor's instructions remain with you if you are a passenger in someone else's vehicle.

For more information on Delaware's seat belt laws or the Click It or Ticket campaign, visit the Office of Highway Safety's website at www.ohs.delaware.gov and hit the Click It or Ticket icon.