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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **Delaware Traffic Fatalities Fall to Lowest Level Since 1999** ***Highway Safety officials credit year-round intensive enforcement efforts***

*Dover* – Delaware Office of Highway Safety officials are pleased to announce a 20% drop in Delaware’s traffic deaths in 2007! It is the lowest number of fatalities to occur on First State roadways since 1999, when 104 people were killed. Tragically, even with the reduction, 118 people still lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes last year. State Police statistics show that the 118 deaths are a significant decline from 147 fatalities in 2006.

“We are constantly striving to implement the most effective strategies possible in an effort to prevent deaths and injuries on our roadways,” said Tricia Roberts, Director of the Office of Highway Safety. “We want to thank our partners from State and local law enforcement, the health care field, and the corporate community for helping us in this endeavor. We could not make this kind of progress without their assistance and ongoing commitment to improving traffic safety.”

OHS officials saw improvements in the areas of bicycle and pedestrian fatalities as well as in statewide seat belt usage. There were no bicyclists killed in 2007 compared to four deaths in 2006. There were 10 fewer pedestrian fatalities in 2007 (17) than there were in 2006 (27). Twenty one fewer drivers and passengers died in 2007 (83) compared to the year before (104), and seat belt use rose to an all time high of 87% statewide this year after another successful Click It or Ticket campaign was conducted in May.

However, three key areas continue to be of great concern: impaired driving deaths, aggressive driving – related deaths, and motorcycle deaths. In 2007 51 people died in alcohol-related crashes. This means that 43% of all traffic deaths last year were alcohol-related. Comparatively in 2006, 38% of all traffic deaths (56) involved alcohol.

As part of OHS's ongoing *Checkpoint Strikeforce* sobriety checkpoint campaign 665 individuals were arrested for DUI in 2007. The campaign will once again be conducted in 2008. New impaired driving prevention awareness efforts unveiled in 2007 included OHS's Dedicated DUI Checkpoint initiative and partnering with the HERO Campaign for Designated Drivers. On August 18, 2007 Lt. Governor John C. Carney proclaimed Delaware the second HERO state in the nation (New Jersey is the first). In 2008, OHS will roll out its plans to promote the HERO campaign statewide by partnering with the Delaware Restaurant Association.

Also troubling in 2007 was that aggressive driving behaviors were predominant contributing factors in 66 (or 62%) of fatal crashes. This is 10 percentage points up from 52% in 2006. Two major enforcement and media blitzes aimed at citing aggressive drivers, and getting the public to call 911 to report aggressive drivers, resulted in thousands of citations and generated a significant increase in calls to police dispatchers, particularly in New Castle County where the focus was the most intense, but did not translate into a reduction in the percentage of fatal crashes attributed to aggressive driving. Speeding continues to be the leading aggressive driving behavior cited in fatal crashes, followed by failure to grant the right of way.

Finally, motorcycle fatalities increased from 12 in 2006 to 17 in 2007. Several factors including speeding, inattention and lack of helmet use on the part of motorcycle operators, as well as inattentive driving on the part of the passenger vehicle operator were cited as causes in the fatal crashes in nearly equal measure. In 2008, OHS will continue its partnership with the State's Motorcycle Rider Education Advisory Committee in an effort to develop strategies to more effectively reach both audiences on how to safely share the road.

Office of Highway Safety Director Tricia Roberts reminds the public that each person has a major role to play in determining the outcome of highway safety statistics in Delaware.

"We urge the public to join us in making a positive impact on highway safety in Delaware. We're doing more than ever before in terms of enforcement, awareness and education. But we need drivers and passengers to partner with us by really focusing their full attention on the task of driving and following these basic but critical safety rules: Never drink and drive, obey posted speed limits, stop at all red lights and stop signs, keep a safe distance between vehicles, ensure all passengers, both children and adults are properly secured in child safety seats or seat belts and buckle up absolutely every time you get in the car."

For more information on Office of Highway Safety programs please visit our website at [www.ohs.delaware.gov](http://www.ohs.delaware.gov) .

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