

# JOINT NEWS RELEASE

Ohio Department of Public Safety · Ohio Department of Transportation · Ohio State Highway Patrol

## **OHIO A LEADER IN HIGHWAY SAFETY** **MOTORIST BEHAVIOR KEY TO REDUCING FATALITIES**

(COLUMBUS – July 24, 2007)— The U.S. Department of Transportation recently announced the lowest highway fatality rate ever recorded and the largest drop in total deaths for 2006. Through its aggressive highway safety program, Ohio was a major contributor to making roadways safer.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) along with the Department of Public Safety have made significant improvements in highway safety over the past several years using expert analysis of crash data and patterns to target high crash and congested locations. In 2006, Ohio achieved several key benchmarks in the areas of highway and public safety, highlighted by the Ohio State Highway Patrol's partnered enforcement efforts with local law enforcement agencies that resulted in a record low traffic crash fatality rate and an historic 82 percent seat belt usage rate among Ohioans.

There were 42,642 traffic deaths in the United States in 2006. This is the lowest recorded total in five years, and the national fatality rate of 1.42 deaths per 100 million miles traveled was the lowest rate recorded by the Department of Transportation. Ohio's fatality rate is well below the national average at 1.1 deaths per 100 million miles traveled. Ohio's goal is to reduce fatalities to 1.0 per 100 million miles traveled by the end of 2008.

Last year, Ohio experienced a 7 percent reduction in crashes and fatalities. In 2005, Ohio had the 14<sup>th</sup> lowest fatality rate in the nation (the most recent year available from the federal government). These improvements saved 89 lives and decreased statewide crashes by more than 24,000.

"We're combining transportation improvements, partnerships with law enforcement and public education to reduce deaths and injuries on our highways," said ODOT Director James Beasley. "But motorist behavior is critical to reducing fatalities even further."

In 2006, there were 334,089 crashes in Ohio – 1,237 people were killed and 83,261 people were injured. The vast majority of the crashes could have been avoided by safer driver behavior. Almost 500 lives could be saved each year if all motorists used a seatbelt, drove sober and traveled at appropriate speeds.

### **2006 Fatalities:**

<b>Crash Type</b>	<b>Total Fatalities</b>	<b>Percentage of All Fatalities</b>
<b>Alcohol</b>	494	40%
<b>No Safety Belt</b>	457	37%
<b>Speed</b>	388	31%

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**For more information on ODOT's safety efforts, contact: (PIO Name, Number). For more information from the Department of Public Safety, contact Thomas Hunter at (614) 466-6178.**

**For more information on the federal report, visit: <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/dot7207.htm>**