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HIGHWAY FATALITIES CONTINUE TO DECLINE IN FLORIDA

~ Preliminary figures show crash fatalities statistic hits an 18-year low ~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida ended 2009 with 2,570 traffic crash fatalities, the lowest in 18 years, according to preliminary data from the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. By comparison, the 2008 preliminary traffic fatalities totaled 2,986 when reported last January. While the number of crash fatalities is similar to 1992's number, the Sunshine State's population grew by approximately five million residents.

“The Department continues its work to provide a safer Florida for everyone who shares our roadways, and Floridians should be encouraged by this downward trend in fatalities,” said DHSMV Executive Director Julie L. Jones. “We are committed to providing the safest possible driving environment by educating drivers, licensing those who prove they are competent and qualified, and enforcing the traffic laws.”

The final count for 2009 will be made available later this year when the Department publishes its annual *Traffic Crash Statistics Report 2009*. Reports from previous years are available online at www.flhsmv.gov/html/safety.html.

“One of the easiest ways for motorists to stay safe on the road is to buckle up,” said Florida Highway Patrol Director, Colonel John Czernis. “We encourage motorists to take precautions, such as fastening their safety belts and ensuring their vehicles are properly maintained. The FHP is working in partnership with all law enforcement agencies statewide, and we are aggressively patrolling to remove dangerous drivers from Florida roadways who pose unnecessary and unlawful risks to others.”

In an effort to reduce crashes, state troopers not only enforce the law, but also educate the public on safe driving habits. They talk to groups about traffic safety, conduct demonstrations using the rollover simulator and DUI goggles, show parents how to properly install car seats and more. The Department's current education campaigns, such as *Drive with CARE* for teen drivers and their parents (www.flhsmv.gov/teens/), are designed to raise awareness of specific Florida traffic laws.

The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles provides highway safety and security through excellence in service, education and enforcement. The Department is leading the way to a safer Florida through the efficient and professional execution of its core mission: the issuance of driver licenses, vehicle tags and titles and operation of the Florida Highway Patrol. To learn more about DHSMV and the services offered, visit www.flhsmv.gov.

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