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DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES HIGHLIGHTS NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK

~ Safety advocates discuss how to reduce teen crashes and fatalities ~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. –Today, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles hosted a Teen Driver Safety Summit to focus on the state’s most at-risk drivers. Governor Charlie Crist has proclaimed Oct. 18-24 *National Teen Driver Safety Week* in Florida, and the Department took the opportunity to bring together safety advocates for a roundtable discussion.

During the summit, teen drivers and representatives from law enforcement organizations, state agencies, industry, as well as road safety advocates, reviewed Florida’s current efforts and exchanged ideas on ways to create the safest possible driving environment for teens.

“Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of teens, and we believe we can save lives by working together to teach teens safe driving habits,” said Executive Director Julie Jones. “The Department has developed a driving guide and a website to engage teens and their parents, and we have engaged our partners to explore other ways to help protect our teen drivers.”

The Department’s new website for teen drivers and their parents is www.flhsmv.gov/teens. It describes Florida’s graduated license law, offers a log where new drivers can document their minimum 50 hours of supervised driving, and much more. The Department’s TakeTheWheel.net is a website by teens, for teens, that provides an interactive forum for teens to share their driving experiences.

Specific behaviors are associated with crashes, such as inexperience and immaturity combined with speed, alcohol-related driving, not wearing safety belts and distracted driving. Below are statewide statistics from DHSMV’s *Traffic Crash Statistics Report 2008* that detail the importance of the summit’s focus:

- The crash rate for teen drivers (ages 15-19) was 399 per 10,000 drivers. That is twice as high as their parents and three to four times higher than their grandparents.
- Despite a 22.5 percent decrease in fatalities among teen drivers and passengers between 2007 and 2008, there were still 193 teens who died in crashes.
- Three hundred eighty-three people died in crashes where a teen was driving.

“While parent involvement is critical, it takes all of us working together, all of us caring, to set up teens for success as safe drivers,” said Director Sandra Lambert. “Discussions like the one we had today help the state steer teens in the right direction and make a real difference.”

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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