



NEWS

CONTACT: Fran Clader
(916) 657-7202

Media Relations Office
2555 First Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95818

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California Roadways Have Never Been Safer

Death Rate Drops to a Record Low

(SACRAMENTO) The number of people killed per 100 million miles driven on California roadways has dropped to the lowest level in history. The newly released Mileage Death Rate (MDR) is 1.18 deaths per 100 million miles driven. The numbers are based on 2007 data. The previous MDR was 1.27 for 2006.

“This is the direct result of a successful partnership between the state’s traffic safety professionals, the news media and the general public. It proves we can change behavior for the better if we all work together,” said Business, Transportation and Housing (BT&H) Secretary Dale Bonner as he announced the new figures in behalf of the Schwarzenegger Administration.

“It’s important to note that these aren’t just abstract numbers. They represent lives saved of real people in California,” stated California Highway Patrol Commissioner Joe Farrow.

To arrive at the annual MDR figure, CHP fatality data for the year is divided by Caltrans’ estimated number of miles driven that year in California. The 2007 MDR is about one tenth of the MDR in 1933.

“While this is encouraging news, our work is not done. We will not rest until we have eliminated traffic crashes as a major cause of death and injury in California,” added Caltrans Director Will Kempton.

The three major causes of fatal crashes are speeding, not wearing a seat belt, and DUI. They have been the focus of aggressive enforcement and education by traffic safety organizations the past several years.

“It is no coincidence that the Mileage Death Rate dropped at the same time we had a reduction in Alcohol-related crashes,” said state Office of Traffic Safety Director Christopher J. Murphy.

The traffic safety organizations within BT&H are not resting on the current success. This Labor Day Weekend, they will be aggressively looking for those who sell alcohol to underage drinkers. “We’ll have our undercover investigators out in force this weekend and they will have zero tolerance for underage drinking,” said Alcoholic Beverage Control Director Steve Hardy.”

One area where there is room for considerable improvement is motorcycle fatalities. The number of registered riders and crashes have bucked the downward trend and are climbing. “We are concerned that many middle-aged people are buying bikes either to save on gas or to recapture their youth, but they aren’t learning to ride properly,” stated Department of Motor Vehicles spokesman Mimi Kahn. “We are reaching out to these people and urging them to take it slow as they learn to ride.”

During the upcoming year, California law enforcement will increase its educational outreach and enforcement efforts to ensure that all motorists share the road.

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