

NEWS RELEASE

Alabama Department of Public Safety

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Tri-state Take Back Our Highways Campaign Promotes Traffic Safety During Thanksgiving Travel Period

Troopers reported nine traffic deaths in Alabama during the 102-hour holiday travel period from 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 21, through midnight Sunday, Nov. 25. A total of 19 traffic deaths – 12 rural and seven urban – occurred in Alabama last year during the Thanksgiving travel period.

Public Safety Director Col. J. Christopher Murphy said alcohol involvement and lack of restraint use was a factor in many of the holiday period deaths. Preliminary reports indicate at least five of the nine deaths were alcohol related, and four of the crash victims were not using safety restraints.

The official holiday travel period capped a week-long tri-state, Take Back Our Highways traffic safety campaign, Nov. 19-25. Troopers reported a reduction in rural crashes and injuries in Alabama for the week. A six-fatality, alcohol-related crash on the first day of the initiative contributed to a week-long total of 21 fatalities – an increase from 17 rural traffic deaths during a similar period in 2006.

The week-long, concentrated highway safety effort – Take Back Our Highways – joined Alabama troopers, sheriff and police departments statewide, and troopers in Tennessee and Mississippi. Public Safety Director Col. J. Christopher Murphy acknowledged the role of all who participated in the tri-state effort to promote traffic safety during the year's busiest travel period.

Murphy recognized Col. Mike Walker, director of the Tennessee Highway Patrol, and Col. Michael Berthay, director of the Mississippi Highway Patrol, for joining in the traffic safety effort. He also thanked Gov. Bob Riley, the Alabama District Attorney's Association, Alabama Sheriffs Association and Alabama Association of Chiefs of Police for partnering with DPS to increase highway and traffic safety.

Preliminary reports from both Mississippi and Tennessee indicated a decrease in traffic deaths during the Thanksgiving holiday travel period. The Tennessee Highway Patrol reported five traffic deaths during the 102-hour period – a decrease from 20 last year. Mississippi reported one death for the period, down from five last year.

Murphy noted that one of the goals of Take Back Our Highways is to have a positive impact on driver behavior. "During holiday travel and throughout the year, we ask motorists to join with law enforcement in support of traffic safety, realizing the importance of driving safely and obeying all traffic laws. Your life and the lives of your loved ones depend on it," Murphy said.

In Alabama, troopers from all six DPS divisions – about 200 additional troopers over and above those assigned to regular patrol duty – were on patrol during the

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initiative. Law enforcement officers statewide targeted traffic violations throughout the holiday, especially driving behavior that often causes crashes and contributes to crash severity. These dangerous behaviors include speeding, failure to yield the right of way, following too closely, driver inattention and DUI.

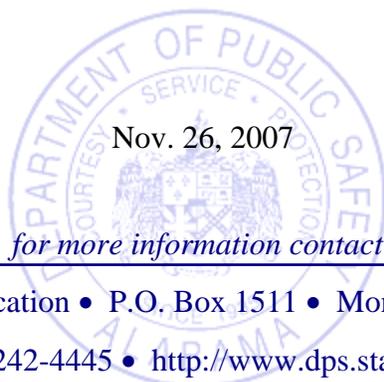
Trooper enforcement activity for the week included 170 DUI arrests compared with 95 last year, and 2,214 seat belt and child restraint citations compared with 1,120 last year. Non-traffic arrests included drug-related offenses and outstanding warrants. Troopers also seized more than \$100,000 in drug-related monies during the campaign.

The following chart provides Alabama crash statistics, along with trooper enforcement activity, for the “Take Back Our Highways” Thanksgiving initiative, Nov. 19-25.

- ◆ Total traffic arrests: 17,466
 - Hazardous arrests: 11,564
 - Includes:
 - DUI: 170
 - Speeding: 8,814
 - Following too Closely: 245
 - Improper Lane Change: 121
 - Seat Belt/Child Restraint: 2,214
 - Non-hazardous arrests: 5,902
- ◆ Total non-traffic arrests: 422
- ◆ Total warnings: 811
- ◆ Total assists: 480
- ◆ Rural crashes: 637
- ◆ Injuries: 253
- ◆ Fatalities: 21

By way of comparison ... the same week, Monday through Sunday, Nov. 20-26, 2006.

- ◆ Total hazardous arrests: 5,384
- ◆ Total non-hazardous arrests: 2898
- ◆ Total warnings: 3,038
- ◆ Total assists: 456
- ◆ Rural crashes: 701
- ◆ Injuries: 327
- ◆ Fatalities: 17



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