



NEWS ADVISORY

Christine Krueger, Director of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2007

CONTACT:

Dennis Smith, 651-201-7569
Lt. Mark Peterson, 651-201-7114

HEAT TO AGAIN BURN SPEEDERS ON MINNESOTA ROADS

Program to Enforce Posted Speed Limit Returns; Last Year's Effort Yielded 34,000 Speed Citations

ST. PAUL — Minnesota motorists will again feel the HEAT (highway enforcement of aggressive traffic) on state roadways throughout 2007 with the return of last year's speed management program to enforce posted speed limits. The program is supported with \$1.5 million in federal funding to support nearly 25,000 overtime hours for dedicated speed patrols by Minnesota State Patrol, and participating county sheriffs' offices and local police departments.

During the previous year of HEAT, officers cited nearly 34,000 drivers for illegal speed and issued 45,000 speed warnings. Speeding is the most commonly reported factor in fatal crashes, especially during summer, the deadliest period on Minnesota roads. Each year in Minnesota, speed contributes to about 150 traffic deaths and 7,000 injuries.

Public Safety and MnDOT officials consider last year's HEAT effort successful and a key effort of the state's *Toward Zero Deaths* programming for reducing traffic deaths. Minnesota's 494 deaths recorded last year was the lowest number of annual traffic deaths since 1945. The 2006 death tally reflects 65 fewer people killed, or a nearly 12 percent decrease, from 559 traffic deaths in 2005.

Both enforcement results and reduced travel speeds were significant.

According to a University of Minnesota study following HEAT last year, the number of vehicles traveling over 70 mph decreased by 11 percent on metro-area freeways (I-35W, I-94 and Hwy. 100) where the speed limit increased to 60 mph. In greater Minnesota on highways where speed limits were raised to 60 mph, the number of vehicles traveling over 70 mph dropped nearly 29 percent. On four-lane, divided, 65 mph roads where the speed limit remained the same, the number of vehicles traveling over 75 mph also decreased by almost 29 percent. Most notable was a 43 percent decrease in number of vehicles traveling in excess of 80 mph on rural 70 mph freeways.

"HEAT works in citing speeders and reducing excessive travel speeds," says Public Safety Commissioner Michael Campion. "The program is continuing because it has improved road safety and helped reduce the number of preventable deaths."

— more —

Alcohol
and Gambling
Enforcement

ARMER/911
Program

Bureau of
Criminal
Apprehension

Driver
and Vehicle
Services

Homeland
Security and
Emergency
Management

Minnesota
State Patrol

Office of
Communications

Office of
Justice Programs

Office of
Traffic Safety

State Fire
Marshal and
Pipeline Safety

HEAT Enforcement

June 4, 2007

Page 2

In addition to speed citations and warnings, 14,000 citations were issued for non-speed related offenses including DWIs; driving after suspension/revocation; drug possessions; no-insurance; warrants; seat belt violations; equipment issues; and 6,459 miscellaneous citations.

The number of total vehicle stops and speeding violations for the Twin Cities area were more than 32,000 and 18,129 respectively. Other regions of the state reported stops and speed citations issued by State Patrol districts: Brainerd (6,855/2,045); Detroit Lakes (4,829/1,370); Duluth (4,829/1,198); Mankato (5,573/1,740); Marshall (8,689/1,732); Rochester (10,770/3,117); St. Cloud (7,874/2,863); Thief River Falls (3,476/550); and Virginia (3,324/942).

Participating agencies in the metropolitan area included the State Patrol; Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington county sheriffs' offices; and Brooklyn Center, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Minneapolis, New Brighton, North Branch, Robbinsdale, Roseville, St. Paul and Wyoming police departments.

In Minnesota, speeding fines are doubled if a motorist is caught speeding 20 mph or more over the limit, and drivers traveling 100 mph or more are subject to a six-month license revocation. Twice as many speed-related fatal crashes occur in rural areas than in urban areas. Illegal or unsafe speed is the greatest crash factor for younger drivers.

***Editor's Note:** A breakout of last year's HEAT traffic citations and warnings by offense by State Patrol district is available upon request.*

Driving Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths