

State police to step up traffic enforcement

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DOVER — Delaware State Police, in partnership with the Delaware Office of Highway Safety, are joining forces with other state law enforcement agencies in the “Drive to Save Lives in Delaware Campaign and the National Distracted Driving Awareness Month- 2019.”

The multi-jurisdictional and high-visibility traffic enforcement initiative is designed to increase traffic enforcement presence as well as enhance safety efforts across Delaware from Friday through Sunday.

The “Drive to Save Lives in Delaware/ National Distracted Driving Awareness Month” campaign’s operational goal is to achieve increased highly visible traffic enforcement across Delaware’s approximately 96 miles.

The initiative will be a contributing effort to support the International Association of Chiefs of Police initiative, “The Drive to Save Lives Campaign” and its goal to reduce traffic deaths and injuries across the United States, DSP said.

The emphasis of this initiative will be to change the high-risk behaviors of motorists, such as distracted driving, impaired driving, speeding, unsafe driving behaviors of the operators of large trucks/buses and the failure of motorists and passengers alike to wear seat-belts.

The participating Delaware agencies in the “Drive to Save Lives in Delaware” include: police from Bethany Beach, Cheswold, Dagsboro, Delaware Capitol, Delaware City, Delaware River and Bay Authority, Delaware State Police, Dover, Elsmere, Felton, Georgetown, Greenwood, Harrington, Laurel, Milford, Millsboro, Milton, New Castle County, Ocean View, Rehoboth Beach, Selbyville, Smyrna, Wyoming and University of Delaware.

Program’s beginnings

In 2014 the IACP initiated an effort to significantly reduce the more than 33,000 highway deaths, which occurred annually on U.S. roadways. The state police and highway patrol leaders from IACP Division of State and Provincial Police have led a sustained data-driven effort since 2014.

The IACP leaders’ goal was to change the high-risk behaviors of motorists in order to decrease the number of crashes through “education and awareness, partnerships, and high-

visibility traffic enforcement". The IACP leaders initiated the effort in 2014 and declared it should be an ongoing effort to prevent the many deaths that occur on our roadways each year.

U.S. 95 is approximately 1,920 miles in length and is currently considered one of the deadliest highways in the country. It carries over 72,000 vehicles for its average daily traffic (with peak daily traffic over 300,000 vehicles) and it has over 10,000 vehicles for its average daily truck traffic (with peak daily truck traffic being over 31,000), per the U.S.-95 Corridor Coalition.

Also, one in 10 highway deaths occurred in a crash involving a large truck and most of the victims of the fatal crashes were passenger vehicle occupants.

There were 37,461 traffic fatalities in 2016 with 18 percent of the involved drivers speeding at the time of the crash. Twenty seven percent of the fatal victims were in a crash involving at least one speeding driver. Additionally, 37 percent of all speeding drivers in fatal crashes were alcohol-impaired and 50% were unrestrained at the time of the crash.

According to NHTSA, in 2016 one person every 50 minutes died in an alcohol-impaired vehicle crash. That equates to almost 29 people every day and a total of 10,497 deaths. Also, 1,233 children 14 years old and under died in drunk-driving crashes in 2016.

All 15 states that line Interstate 95 from Maine to Florida will be participating in the "I-95 Drive to Save Lives" campaign.

The rationale

After considering crash-related data and information from various sources, the following has been determined:

Nine percent of 2016's fatal crashes involved distraction. In 2016 alone Distracted Driving led to 3,450 deaths and in 2015 391,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted driving.

Teens remain the largest age group involved in distracted driving-related fatal crashes. With distracted driving being proven to be a grossly underreported violation, these numbers are only the minimum.

Per NHTSA, 10,000 lives per year are lost due to alcohol-related crashes. In 2017 one person every 48 minutes died in an alcohol-impaired vehicle crash. That equates to almost 30 people in the U.S. dying every day due to this deadly behavior.

According to GHSA, there were more fatally-injured drivers who tested positive for drugs than alcohol. In 2015 57 percent of fatally-injured drivers were tested for drugs with 35.6 percent testing positive for marijuana- the highest detected drug.

Per NHTSA, the national seat belt use rate is at 90.1 percent; however, approximately 27.5 million people still refrain from buckling up. In 2016 48 percent of passenger vehicle occupants that were killed were also unrestrained. Also, drivers with alcohol and drugs in their systems were less likely to buckle up and more likely to speed and commit other traffic violations.

Per NHTSA, speeding has been involved in approximately one-third of all crash fatalities for over two decades. Speed was the cause of 9,717 deaths in 2017.

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