



NEWS RELEASE

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**MORE THAN 8,100 VEHICLES STOPPED IN NORTHEAST IN FIRST YEAR OF HEAT;
ENFORCEMENT TO CONTINUE AS TRAVEL SPEEDS DECLINE**

Results Issued at Toward Zero Deaths Conference as Road Fatalities Drop Dramatically

DULUTH — During a year of HEAT (highway enforcement of aggressive traffic), law enforcement agencies in the Duluth and Virginia State Patrol districts stopped 8,153 vehicles and cited 2,140 for illegal speed.

HEAT will continue in 2007 with \$1.5 million in federal funding. According to MnDOT speed data collected before and after the project, high travel speeds continued to drop on roads that had posted speed limits increased from 55 mph to 60 mph.

Also in the districts, there were 5,406 speed warnings, and 922 citations for non-speed related offenses including DWI (11); driving after suspension/revocation (92); drugs (31); no insurance (109); warrants (40); seat belt non-use (91); and equipment/miscellaneous-related (531). Across the state, agencies stopped 88,238 vehicles and cited 33,686 drivers for illegal speed. The figures represent citations issued during HEAT stops and not during regular traffic enforcement

Results from HEAT were issued today in Duluth at the annual *Toward Zero Deaths* conference, a forum for nearly 500 traffic safety stakeholders working to reduce the number of traffic crash deaths and life-altering injuries. To-date in 2006, Minnesota road deaths are down 13 percent — roughly 56 fewer people killed than at this time last year. This trend may result in the lowest annual number of traffic fatalities since the end of World War II in 1945.

In the metro area on Highways I-35W, I-94 and 100, vehicles traveling over 70 mph decreased by 31 percent, translating to nearly 97,000 fewer vehicles a day traveling over 70 mph. In greater Minnesota, data collected on Highways 2 and 71 shows the number of vehicles traveling over 70 mph has dropped 36 percent, or nearly 1,500 fewer vehicles a day traveling over 70 mph.

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HEAT Enforcement

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“When we look at reduced speeds and number of speeders cited, HEAT clearly has had an impact on our road safety,” says Bernie Arseneau, director of Mn/DOT’s Office of Traffic, Safety and Operations. “This program, along with other enforcement efforts, engineering improvements, and local-level collaborations between the public and state agencies, is responsible for the dramatic reduction of traffic deaths over the past three years in Minnesota.”

The number of total first-year 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); Mankato (5,573/1,740); Marshall (8,689/1,732); Rochester (10,770/3,117); St. Cloud (7,874/2,863); and Thief River Falls (3,476/550).

Speed patrols will continue through 2006 as part of statewide enforcement campaigns emphasizing seat belt use and impaired driving. A public education campaign alerting motorists to the danger of excessive speed will be conducted in November.

The results of statewide pre- and post-enforcement public perception surveys will be released soon. The surveys collected data on the public’s perception of posted speeds, personal travel speeds, traffic enforcement and its impact, and speed as a factor in congestion and crashes.

HEAT has been supported by nearly 1,400 hours of additional weekly traffic enforcement by the Patrol, county sheriffs’ offices and local police. Participating agencies in northeast Minnesota include the State Patrol; Carlton, Itasca and St. Louis county sheriffs’ offices; and the Floodwood Police Department.

Each year in Minnesota, speed is a factor in about 150 traffic deaths and 7,000 injuries. 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 traffic citations and warnings by offense by State Patrol district is available upon request.*

Driving Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths