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Traffic Fatalities for 2009 Reach Record Low

Calendar Year 2009 Traffic Fatalities Continue Record Downward Trend

The U.S. Department of Transportation today announced that the number of overall traffic fatalities reported at the end of 2009 reached the lowest level since 1954, declining for the 15th consecutive quarter. According to early projections, the fatality rate, which takes into account the number of miles traveled, reached the lowest level ever recorded.

“This is exciting news, but there are still far too many people dying in traffic accidents,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “Drivers need to keep their hands on the steering wheel and their focus on the road in order to stay safe.”

The projected fatality data for 2009 places the highway death count at 33,963, a drop of 8.9 percent as compared to the 37,261 deaths reported in 2008. The fatality rate for 2009 declined to the lowest on record, to 1.16 fatalities per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) down from 1.25 fatalities per 100 million VMT in 2008.

“This continuing decline in highway deaths is encouraging, but our work is far from over,” said National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator David Strickland. “We want to see those numbers drop further. We will not stop as long as there are still lives lost on our nation’s highways. We must continue our efforts to ensure seat belts are always used and stay focused on reducing distracted and impaired driving.”

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration attributes the decline in 2009 to a combination of factors that include, high visibility campaigns like *Click It or Ticket* to increase seat belt use, and *Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest* which helps with the enforcement of state laws to prevent drunk driving and distracted driving. In addition, the decline is also the result of safer roads, safer vehicles and motorists driving less.

NHTSA annually collects crash statistics from the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to produce annual reports on traffic fatality trends. The agency intends to update 2009 estimates regularly as more data becomes available. The final counts for 2009 will be made available in the summer of 2010. To view the preliminary fatality statistics visit: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811291.PDF>