



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
AND AUTO SAFETY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT: Jeremy Gunderson (202) 408-1711 x27**

**STATEMENT OF  
Judith Lee Stone, President  
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates)  
On  
Release of Fatality Figures for 2006 Motor Vehicle Crashes**

Today's release by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of 2006 motor vehicle fatality data shows that some improvement has been made in reducing the number of deaths since 2005 but the total number of fatalities last year is still one of the largest in the last decade. NHTSA's announcement clearly represents neither steady nor sustained progress toward addressing the number one killer of all Americans between the ages of 4 and 34. The number of deaths, and the death rate -- 42,642, and 1.42 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled -- still leave the U.S. lagging behind other industrialized nations throughout the world.

Motorcycle deaths rose by 5.1% (an additional 234 deaths over 2005, rising to 4,810, more than pedestrian deaths for the first time), and no progress was made in curbing alcohol-related and large truck deaths. The biggest percentage decrease occurred in passenger vehicles (3.3% or 1,028 fewer people killed).

Ironically, the same day NHTSA announced the 2006 numbers, an article appeared in the *New York Times* ("Safety First? True Once, but U.S. Now Lags in Road Deaths," *NY Times*, 7/22/07) quoting a report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Transport Forum that ranked the United States 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 48 countries in the study, based on number of fatalities per capita. The OECD report shows that Australia, Britain, France, Germany and Japan dramatically outperformed the U.S. in deaths per capita, and when measuring lowest death rates by miles driven, the U.S. ranked only 11<sup>th</sup>.

We know the solutions to reducing highway deaths and injuries but we are lacking the political leadership to enact the laws and regulations to save lives. How many more studies and reports and how many more deaths do we need before our leaders move aggressively to reduce the carnage on our streets and highways?

We are always encouraged to see the fatality numbers go down but it is too early to celebrate, especially because this data only indicates a one-year reduction, following several years of rising deaths. Legislators and other policy leaders need to attack the long-standing unfinished agenda of laws and regulations in state legislatures, in Congress and Executive Branch agencies that we know will succeed in preventing highway deaths and injuries.

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*Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety is an alliance of consumer, health and safety groups and insurance companies and agents working together to make America's roads safer. For more information, please visit [www.saferoads.org](http://www.saferoads.org).*