



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
AND AUTO SAFETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STATEMENT OF
Judith Lee Stone, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates)
on
RELEASE OF PRELIMINARY 2006 MOTOR VEHICLE DEATH AND INJURY DATA
May 25, 2007**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced preliminary estimates today that deaths due to motor vehicle crashes in 2006 remained largely static, at 43,300.

Particularly disturbing, but not surprising, is the fact that motorcycle rider fatalities are expected to increase by 5.4% when the final tally is released later in the year. This is the highest jump for any area in the Fatal Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data, and is the ninth year in a row that increases have occurred. **Nearly 4,800 motorcycle riders are estimated to have lost their lives in 2006, a 125 percent increase since 1997.**

NHTSA projects occupant fatalities will be shown to decline by “about 1 percent”, a disappointing finding that points to flat national seat belt use rates, at best. They also predict that alcohol-related deaths will increase by 2.4 percent (17,941), the highest level killed since 1992.

These disturbing numbers are a clear indication that our nation lacks the momentum needed to make noticeable headway in reducing the unacceptable annual toll of deaths on highways and in neighborhoods. It is no coincidence that in 2007, among the 25 state legislatures needing to adopt a primary enforcement seat belt law, only one state has done so (leaving nearly half the states without these effective measures and a national belt use rate that is among the lowest of industrialized nations in the world), and no state adopted an all-rider motorcycle helmet law. Thirty (30) states have unenforceable, age-specific helmet laws, or no helmet law at all. And despite research backing numerous effective impaired driving laws, many states still lack them.

The pace at which state legislatures are moving to address the number one killer of children and people ages 4-34 is glacial. Record numbers of Americans will take to the road this Memorial Day holiday weekend without the essential protection of some of the most fundamental and lifesaving laws in the arsenal of state legislatures. The traffic safety agenda is dangerously unfinished.

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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.