

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **KDOT urges motorists to buckle up during Thanksgiving travel week**

*Stepped-up statewide enforcement blitz buckles down on those not buckled up*

**TOPEKA, Kan.** – The Thanksgiving holiday should be a joyous time for all families, but far too often the celebration turns to tragedy on the nation’s highways. How often? More than 700 people died in passenger vehicle crashes during the 2005 Thanksgiving holiday season, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In Kansas, 364 persons lost their lives in passenger vehicle crashes in 2006, and of those, over 60% were not wearing seat belts. Regular seat belt use is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. Research has shown that when lap/shoulder belts are used properly, the risk of injury to passenger car occupants is reduced by 45 to 60 percent.

Seat belts have been proven to make a real difference in saving lives. According to NHTSA statistics, 30,521 occupants died in passenger vehicle crashes in 2006 across the nation, and more than half – 16,786 – were not wearing seat belts.

To combat these unnecessary fatalities, KDOT is joining with state and local law enforcement from Nov. 15 through Nov. 24 to launch stepped-up statewide seat belt enforcement mobilizations. Law enforcement will crack down on low seat belt use in an effort to reduce highway fatalities – with an emphasis on convincing more motorists to buckle up both day and night.

“On behalf of state and local law enforcement, and the Kansas Department of Transportation, I urge everyone traveling in a vehicle this holiday week to buckle up,” said KDOT Bureau of Traffic Safety Chief Pete Bodyk. “Whether it’s a short trip to the grocery store, or a long haul across the state: drive carefully, don’t drive impaired, and again, buckle up - every trip, every time.”

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