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NEWS RELEASE

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Kansas Highway Fatalities at Record Low

Traffic Safety Advocates still not satisfied

TOPEKA - Kansans finally seem to be getting the message: slow down, buckle up, and never drive if you've been drinking. That is the encouraging news from the Kansas Department of Transportation. Preliminary records indicate 384 fatalities for 2008, down from 416 in 2007, which would set an all-time low.

Many factors have played into this decrease in fatalities. KDOT officials point to legislation in recent years addressing Child Passenger Safety, tougher DUI penalties, and a primary seat belt law for teens. KDOT has been vigilant in developing partnerships with law enforcement agencies, and has increased its efforts to reduce the number of motorcycle fatalities.

However, KDOT is not satisfied with the loss of 384 lives. "That number still represents too many families who are grieving over what may have been a preventable death," said KDOT Secretary Deb Miller. "Even though we've increased our seat belt use to 77.3 percent, this number reflects that nearly one person out of every four is still not buckling up."

Kansas Highway Patrol Superintendent Col. Terry Maple agreed with Miller. "We won't be satisfied until our seat belt compliance rate is 100%, and deaths attributed to failure to

buckle up are eliminated,” Maple said. “In addition, there are still people killed from drinking and driving in Kansas. People are still driving while distracted, driving over the speed limit or driving too fast for conditions, causing needless deaths. Kansas traffic laws are enforced to prevent these tragedies.”

Crash statistics, including fatalities, were first recorded in 1947. Last year is only the second time since then that the number of fatalities has been below 400. The only other year was 1992 when 387 people were killed.

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