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***Oklahoma Highway Safety Office launches "Click-It or Ticket" campaign
2009 mobilization targets unbelted drivers, passengers***

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (May, 2009) — During 2007 in Oklahoma, 310 people who died in highway crashes were not wearing seat belts. Nearly 2,000 unrestrained drivers or passengers died between 2002 and 2007.

Nationwide during 2007, more than 14,000 people in passenger vehicles died in crashes while unbelted. About half of those people's lives could have been saved if they had been wearing seat belts at the time of the crash. As sad as this statistic is, the numbers are even worse at night than during the day, according to new figures released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

"Even one death caused by not wearing a safety belt is one too many," said Scott Watkins, director of the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office. "Taking a moment to fasten a seat belt may be one of the best investments you'll ever make. Through public education and enforcement efforts across the state, we hope to raise awareness and save lives."

That's why OHSO is joining state and local law enforcement agencies and highway safety groups in supporting an aggressive national "Click-It or Ticket" seat belt enforcement campaign May 18-31. Police will be ticketing unbelted vehicle occupants around the clock, day and night.

"Consistent research has shown that fewer people are buckling up at night, and that's when the risk of being in a fatal crash is the greatest," Watkins said. "That's why Oklahoma law enforcement officers will be out in force, 24/7, to make sure drivers and passengers take seat belt laws seriously."

Watkins added that regular seat belt use is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. Yet NHTSA observational studies show that nearly one out of five Americans still fails to wear a seat belt when driving or riding in a motor vehicle.

"Wearing your seat belt costs you nothing — but not wearing it will," Watkins said. "Unless you want to risk a ticket — or, worse, your life — please remember to buckle up day and night. 'Click-It or Ticket' isn't just a slogan; it's a promise."

For more information, visit www.ohso.ok.gov or www.nhtsa.gov.