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ANNUAL ENFORCEMENT WAVE TO HIGHLIGHT NONTRADITIONAL EFFORTS TO GET MORE PEOPLE TO BUCKLE UP

One hundred twenty four lives were lost unbelted on Nevada roads in 2007. At least 60 of those people would be alive today if they had simply buckled up.

If you knew that taking two seconds to do something would save your life, 99 percent of us would do it. Sadly, some people still fail to get this message. So beginning Monday, May 19th, police across the state will be out on overtime shifts looking for those who still need the education a citation promises.

On Friday, May 16th, at 10:00 a.m. at Palm Mortuary at 6701 North Jones Blvd, law enforcement agencies from across Clark County will gather to discuss their efforts to get every driver and passenger they encounter to buckle up as part of the national Click-it-or-Ticket campaign, funded by the Nevada Office of Traffic Safety.

Even though in Nevada you must first be stopped for another violation, CIOT guidelines are followed. On Friday morning we will be announcing plans for coming efforts to achieve standardized enforcement of the seat belt law in the coming session of the legislature.

Special guest speaker will be James F. Ports, Jr., Deputy Administrator for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Mr. Ports will speak to the significance of raising our seat belt usage, especially for young men who are the worst offenders of not being belted.

Mr. Ports will also be awarding two local companies for their efforts to educate Las Vegas about the importance of seat belts. MGM MIRAGE began their "Operation SafeDrive" in October, 2006. The project focuses on different traffic safety topics, including occupant protection for all ages; highlighting small children, teen drivers and adults who need to buckle up. The project is directed at MGM MIRAGE employees and their families as well as the general public.

Anyone who has been on a freeway in Clark County is familiar with the Palm Mortuary "We'd Rather Wait" campaign. The message is clear: don't do something risky that can claim your life. The project began with the "Don't Drink and Drive" message, followed by Palm urging residents to "Buckle Up, We'd Rather Wait."

Having a mortuary tell you they'd rather wait is a graphic way to drive a message home. That is why the press conference is being held at Palm Mortuary, adjacent to their

“Healing Fields.” The backdrop itself will remind those watching that their actions have devastating consequences.

Congresswoman Shelley Berkley and State Senator Dennis Nolan will also address the topic of the importance of a safety culture in Clark County. In 2007, fatalities were down dramatically for vehicle occupants, despite the first five months of the year being on record pace for the number of people killed.

2008 has continued the trend begun last year. Vehicle occupant fatalities are down, pedestrian fatalities are up and seat belt usage is flat. We need efforts to urge non seat belt users to buckle up to be successful.

Research shows a minimum nine percent jump in seat belt use in states that enact standard or primary enforcement of their seat belt laws. In Nevada, every point of increase translates to three lives per year saved; meaning history tells us that in Nevada we can expect to save 21 lives in the first year of standard enforcement of the set belt law.

To drive the seat belt message even further, we will hear from two young men whose lives were forever changed by failing to buckle up. Joey Snyder was out having too good a time with a friend when he lost control of his vehicle. Joey was unbelted in the vehicle and ejected from the vehicle, then thrown back inside the car.

The force of the crash internally decapitated Joey, along with other internal injuries; at UMC Trauma, hanging blood as fast as they could, and having to shock his heart back to life three times, his doctors gave him a negative chance of survival. That was eight months ago.

As testament to youth and the human body, as well as the staff at UMC Trauma, today Joey is getting on with his life. He has memory issues and is blind, but he is also getting ready to go back to school and life is good. Joey’s passenger, who was belted walked away from the crash.

Kyle Gillogly, is another young man who was critically injured and lives with permanent disabilities due to being in a crash unbelted. Kyle too was ejected when the truck he was a passenger in rolled. To make his story worse, the truck rolled over him.

Kyle describes his crash as “involving adrenalin, stupidity, speed, and only one person wearing a seatbelt in the truck.” The driver was belted and uninjured. Kyle and Joey both fit the profile of who drives and rides unbelted in vehicles: most often it is young people, especially males, between the ages of 15 and 34, basically, those with the most to lose. Kyle was 16 and Joey was 19 when their crashes occurred. In both cases, the other person in the vehicle was belted and both times, they walked away from the crash.

There will be opportunity for individual interviews after the press conference and law enforcement is available throughout the entire wave, through June 3rd.

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