



**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

# **HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN**

**FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2010**

October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010

## **EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW**



**JON S. CORZINE**



**ANNE MILGRAM**

## **SAFE PASSAGE**

*moving toward zero fatalities*

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Federal law requires the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety (DHTS) to develop and implement an annual Highway Safety Plan (HSP) that addresses the primary causes of motor vehicle-related crashes and the resulting injuries, deaths and property damage. Two crash data sources were used in the development of the 2010 plan: the New Jersey Crash Records system maintained by the New Jersey Department of Transportation's Bureau of Safety Programs and the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) maintained by the New Jersey State Police. In addition, DHTS partnered with the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) to determine seat belt usage rates in all seating positions, and Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind poll to assess motorist behavior and their opinions about safety-related legislative proposals.

The focus of the plan is to ensure "Safe Passage" for all users of the State's transportation system – motorists, passengers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. This will require DHTS and its many public and private sector partners to focus their resources on crash prevention with a goal of "moving toward zero fatalities." The HSP outlines the proven countermeasures – education, engineering, enforcement, and emergency services – that will be used to attain this goal.

## NEW JERSEY'S CRASH PROBLEM

Motor-vehicle related fatalities in New Jersey decreased from 724 in 2007 to 590 in 2008, an overall decline of 19% and the lowest number of recorded deaths in the State since 1948. The previous year, fatalities dropped 6% continuing a downward trend after a spike in 2006. While car drivers represent the greatest number of fatalities (241), they, along with passengers (109) also accounted for the majority of the decrease in overall roadway deaths. Pedestrian fatalities (135) also declined for the second straight year, while the number of bicyclists (20) and motorcyclists (85) increased. Mirroring traffic deaths, motor-vehicle related injuries in New Jersey also declined in 2008. Since 2003, injuries have dropped 17%.

While no county is immune from traffic crashes, ten counties accounted for 67% of the state's traffic fatalities in 2008. Urban Essex, coupled with more suburban Monmouth, Middlesex and Burlington Counties, were responsible for nearly half (32%) of that number. The greatest number of motor vehicle fatalities occurred in Essex (48), while pedestrian fatalities (16) were most prevalent in Union County. Forty percent of the State's bicyclist fatalities occurred in Burlington and Hudson Counties, while Cumberland and Middlesex Counties accounted for 20% of the motorcyclists killed last year.

What's causing traffic crashes in the Garden State? Speed/aggressive driving, alcohol and drug impairment, inexperience, and distraction are some of the most significant contributing factors. The HSP takes into consideration the following key 2008 crash data analysis findings.

### KEY 2008 NEW JERSEY CRASH DATA ANALYSIS FINDINGS

- While New Jersey's front seat belt usage rate rose for the 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive year to 92.67% in 2009 (79,000 more motor vehicle occupants are buckling up), backseat belt usage by adults is just 32% (52% when children are included). Nearly half of the motor vehicle occupants killed in crashes between 2000 and 2008 (48 percent) were unrestrained.
- Despite a 23% decline in alcohol-related fatalities in 2008, one in four fatal motor vehicle crashes were still caused by impaired drivers (26%).
- Pedestrian fatalities dropped for the third consecutive year, but still accounted for 23 percent of all traffic fatalities, 10% higher than the national average. In addition, through July 2009, pedestrian deaths are up 28% over the same time period last year.
- Bicycle fatalities, after remaining stable for several years, spiked in 2008 to 20 compared to 12 in the previous year. Crash analysis shows a troubling trend in unsafe riding behaviors.
- Since 2000, motorcyclist deaths have accounted for 10% of all roadway fatalities, despite motorcycles representing just 2% of the registered vehicles in the State. There has been an upward trend in fatalities involving unhelmeted riders.
- With the exception of 2006, young driver fatalities have declined every year since 2001. Driver inattention, followed by speed and failure to yield continue to be the most prevalent contributing factors in young driver crashes.
- Older driver fatal crashes decreased 36 percent from 2002 to 2008, despite a growing 65 plus population.
- Use of hand-held phones while driving stabilized between 2007 and 2008, while the percentage of drivers who never use them dropped six percent. But 80% of motorists report seeing other drivers using cell phones "all the time." In addition, 70% of motorists believe, despite research showing otherwise, that talking on a hand-held phone is more dangerous than talking hands-free.
- Speed-related crashes resulted in a slight increase in deaths from 2007 to 2008. Aggressive driving behaviors are cited as the "biggest threat to safety on the road."

### PLAN EMPHASIS AREAS

The HSP outlines how \$13 million in federal funds will be used to address the state's most pressing traffic safety problems. Emphasis areas include: occupant protection (safety belts and car seats); speeding/aggressive, impaired (focusing on alcohol and drugs) and distracted driving; pedestrian, bicycle and motorcycle safety; and young and older drivers. The plan also provides continued support for the state's traffic crash records management system and emergency medical services.

DHTS will continue its statewide public education and enforcement programs including *Click It or Ticket/100% Buckle Up* (seat belt use), *Over the Limit, Under Arrest* (impaired driving), *Hang Up, Just Drive* (distracted driver), *Obey the Signs or Pay the Fines* (speeding/aggressive driving), and *Don't Drive Stupid* (teen driving). County-wide and local traffic safety programs, with clearly defined performance goals and measures, led by Community Traffic Safety Programs (CTSPs) and municipal agencies are also earmarked for funding in the 2010 HSP. And for the first-time, DHTS will partner with four non-profit organizations – MADD, the AAA Clubs of New Jersey, the New Jersey State Safety Council and the Transportation Management Associations -- to fund statewide traffic safety initiatives addressing key priorities and demographic groups.

The countermeasures outlined in the HSP can positively impact safety. However, key public policy initiatives are essential for stemming the tide of crashes in the State. DHTS is calling for passage of S18, which would close the backseat loophole in the state's primary safety belt law and save lives. DHTS will also continue its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Teen Driver Study Commission, with a strong focus on passage of S2848. Dubbed the "permit" bill, it would mandate participation in a parent/teen orientation as a pre-requisite for obtaining a permit, lengthen the permit from 6 to 12 months, mandate supervised practice driving, and ensure private, one-on-one behind the wheel training. DHTS, in partnership with the Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC), will launch a public outreach initiative in support of two teen driving bills – Kyleigh's Law (vehicle decal) and earlier curfew/one passenger restriction – which go into effect May 1, 2010.

## GOING FORWARD

Recognizing that zero is DHTS' bottom line, the 2010 HSP sets targets, by region of the state (Northern, Central and Southern), for moving toward zero fatalities. Additionally, DHTS is branding all of its initiatives with the "Safe Passage...moving toward zero fatalities" message and calling on all of its grantees and traffic safety partners to follow its lead. This will ensure consistent messaging to the public and help reinforce that one crash, one injury, one death, is simply one too many.

See the complete New Jersey Highway Safety Plan FY 2010 for detailed information.