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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **California Traffic Deaths Drop for Fifth Consecutive Year**

*Traffic Safety Grants Look to Continue Trend*

Sacramento, CA – California saw a decline in overall traffic deaths in 2010, marking the fifth year in a row of safer roads. According to federal government figures, total vehicle fatalities dropped 11.9 percent, from 3,081 in 2009 to 2,715 in 2010. Since the latest high of 4,333 in 2005, the 2010 figures show a total decline of 37.3 percent.

California continues with double-digit percentage decreases even as the nation shows signs of leveling, with some states showing increases. Early national estimates are for an overall decline of approximately three percent.

“California and its people can be proud of these gains,” said Christopher J. Murphy, Director of the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). “A tremendous effort has been put forth by traffic safety organizations, but in the end, it’s the motoring public that made the difference. They are the ones who need to keep this momentum going.”

The 2010 figures are the lowest for the state since 1944, when one tenth the number of vehicles traveled one sixteenth the number of miles. While the economy has some effect, officials also point to high visibility enforcement, sobriety checkpoints, multiple public awareness campaigns, safer car construction, better road design, and faster emergency medical services as factors.

"Well-managed traffic safety campaigns by law enforcement throughout the state targeting dangerous driver behavior is a factor in the continued reduction of traffic-related deaths and injuries," said California Highway Patrol Commissioner Joe Farrow. "Through the behavioral changes of the motoring public, like buckling up, designating a non-drinking driver and eliminating distractions, progress is made daily resulting in lives saved."

(more)

Under a shared vision of *Toward Zero Deaths – Every 1 Counts*, state and local agencies and organizations have been developing and implementing the California Strategic Highway Safety Plan since 2006. OTS, CHP, California Department of Transportation, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Federal Highway Administration, county and local governments, as well as individuals and community organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving have been actively pursuing work on over 150 specific actions contained within Plan.

So that 2012 will continue the gains, the Office of Traffic Safety today announced \$76 million from federal funding to support 213 traffic safety grants to state and local agencies for the grant year that begins October 1, 2011. The new grants are a combination of time-tested, successful programs and emerging efforts, some tackling new problems.

Major emphasis will be given to combating drunk driving with sobriety checkpoints, help for special DUI prosecutors, and targeted probation department staffing and warrant enforcement in efforts directed at the worst of the worst drunk driving offenders. There will be an expansion of educational and awareness programs for youth like *Every 15 Minutes*, *Impact Teen Drivers*, *Real DUI Trials in Schools*, *Smart Start*, and other programs for high school students just starting their driving careers. A new peer-to-peer project, *Teens in the Driver's Seat*, will be launched in communities and schools throughout the state.

Two new areas – distracted driving and drugged driving – that are seeing increases will receive special emphasis. The distracted driving effort began in April and will expand next year. The incidence of drugs alone and in combination with alcohol in fatal crashes has been rising steadily for the last five years. New grants will fund increases in drug recognition training, special district attorneys dedicated to drugged driving cases, and new laboratory drug testing equipment.

Wanting to keep the trend of fatalities in every major category moving downward, grants have been awarded in the other program areas of motorcycle, bicycle and pedestrian safety, putting the latest life saving technology in the hands of emergency responders, and continuing to push for using technology to ease access, gain speed and increase flexibility in data input and usage.

“The drop in fatalities that we have seen in the last five years means that thousands of Californians are with their families today instead of being a traffic statistic,” said Murphy. “But we cannot let up. There are still thousands whose needless tragedies should have been prevented.”

For a list of 2012 grants, visit the OTS website at [www.ots.ca.gov](http://www.ots.ca.gov).

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