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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 4, 2012

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Teen Seat Belt Use Reaches All Time High

Record Usage Nearly Matches General Population

Sacramento, CA – The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) today announced that seat belt use for teens jumped over two percent in the past two years, from 94 percent in 2010 to 96.1 percent in 2012. This nearly matches the usage rate for all vehicle occupants in the state, which stands at 96.6 percent. Both are now at record high levels. The new teen rate is a large increase from the 88.9 percent observed just four years ago.

“We are encouraged by these latest results,” said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. “Everyone in the car buckling up for every trip, every day, is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. This is especially true with teen drivers, the age group with the highest crash rates.”

Nationally, teen seat belt use is in the low 80 percent range. The reasons for California’s high rate are thought to be due to heavy enforcement and awareness campaigns like *Click It or Ticket*, as well as a large number of efforts aimed specifically at teens like *Every 15 Minutes*, *Start Smart*, *Right Turn*, *Teen Smart*, and *Friday Night Live* where seat belt usage is emphasized.

Researchers from CSU Fresno surveyed traffic near 100 high schools in 29 counties in the spring of 2012. Notable items from the latest survey include:

- The usage rate for passengers, as opposed to drivers, is up markedly in just three years, from 85.7 percent in 2009 to 95.8 percent this year.
- Slightly more teen girls regularly wear seat belts than teen boys, 97.8 percent to 96.1 percent.
- Pickup truck occupants are still the least likely to wear their belts at 93.7 percent, but that rate has steadily improved.
- Surveyed observations in Contra Costa and Santa Cruz counties showed 100 percent usage, although ongoing day-to-day use is likely lower.
- Monterey was the county with the lowest usage rate at 87.2 percent

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