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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Granholm Lauds Traffic Safety Milestones** *Michigan now ranks No. 2 in safety belt use*

**LANSING.** Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today praised Michigan's accomplishments in traffic safety following the recent release of state-by-state safety belt use by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The report ranks Michigan's new 94.3 percent safety belt use rate as second only to Washington, which recorded a usage rate of 96.3 percent.

Michigan has experienced five consecutive years of increasing safety belt use. During that same time period, the number of traffic fatalities, injuries and crashes steadily decreased. In fact, in 2005, the state reached the lowest traffic fatality level since 1945, and the lowest number of traffic-related injuries since 1959.

"Thanks to significant strides in reducing deaths on our roadways, Michigan continues to set the standard for traffic safety nationwide," said Colonel Peter C. Munoz, director of the Michigan State Police. "These results are even more impressive when you consider that more vehicles travel more miles each and every year."

The official safety belt use rate of 94.3 percent, the highest ever recorded in Michigan, was derived by trained observers from the Wayne State University Transportation Research Group who conducted an end-of-summer direct observation survey at various locations throughout the state. The results reveal Michigan's belt use rate rose slightly from 94 percent in May 2006.

"These positive results represent a true team effort that involved local police agencies, sheriff offices and Michigan State Police as well as host of other traffic safety partners across the state," said Michael L. Prince, OHSP division director.

Michigan experienced its first significant increase in safety belt use in 2000 when the state's primary enforcement law took effect. Belt use went from 70 percent with a secondary enforcement law to 83.5 percent that year. Safety belt use in Michigan first climbed above 90 percent in 2003, reaching 90.5 percent. In 2005, belt use jumped again, reaching 92.9 percent.

For every 1 percent increase in safety belt use, an estimated 10 traffic deaths and 130 serious injuries are prevented annually.

Currently, only 10 states and Puerto Rico have belt use rates above 90 percent, with rates varying across the country from as low as 63.5 percent in New Hampshire and Wyoming to a high of 96.3 in Washington. The national use rate stands at 81 percent.

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To help maintain Michigan's success, the Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission (GTSAC) developed a comprehensive, long-range plan designed to guide future traffic safety endeavors. The *State of Michigan Strategic Highway Safety Plan* identified twelve areas of emphasis such as motorcycle safety, intersection safety and senior mobility and safety.

The complete GTSAC plan is available on the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) Web site at [www.michigan.gov/ohsp](http://www.michigan.gov/ohsp).

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