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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SAFETY BELT MOBILIZATION CITATION A LIFESAVER  
LAPEER COUNTY TRUCK DRIVER CREDITS BELT FOR PREVENTING SERIOUS INJURIES**

There may not be a ready-made greeting card for this moment, but a Lapeer County man plans to send a thank you card to a Michigan State Police Motor Carrier officer – for recently issuing him a safety belt citation.

Michael Goralski feels that ticket saved his life!

Goralski, 38, works for a Lapeer County well drilling company and was issued the citation June 2 while en route to a job in Shiawassee County. The citation was issued by Motor Carrier Officer Jim Griffiths of the Corunna Post as part of that division's support of the statewide *Click It or Ticket* safety belt enforcement campaign. Motor Carrier officers issued 2,932 safety belt citations to drivers of large trucks during the two-week mobilization.

That same night, Goralski was involved in a horrific crash in Lapeer County while on his way home.

Goralski's water tanker truck was struck by 1999 Pontiac Grand Am in an intersection and rolled several times. The impact was so severe it knocked the front axle from the 1995 Aero Max, ejecting everything but the driver from the vehicle. Goralski had to be extricated from the truck using the Jaws of Life.

"I saw the trees coming at me," he said. "I thought I was dead."

Because Goralski was wearing his safety belt, his injuries, although painful, were not life-threatening.

"I'm bruised from head to toe," he said. "I have one bruise across most of my lower back. But I'm still alive."

Goralski said he never wore his safety belt because of his size – it was uncomfortable. Although he recently lost a great deal of weight, he still hadn't developed the habit of wearing it.

"That morning, as I was backing out of the driveway, my 6-year-old son said, "Dad, you have to buckle up." I wore it until after I dropped him off. It just wasn't something I did.

Goralski and a co-worker, who also received a safety belt citation that day while driving another one of the company's trucks, discussed the need to start buckling up.

"Before we took off for home, that was one of the last things we asked each other about – whether each of us were buckled up. I thank God I was wearing it. I'm here to tell you, it saves lives."

While Michigan enjoys the benefits of an all-time high compliance rate for safety belt use in passenger vehicles, truck drivers in Michigan and nationally are well behind in complying with the safety belt law. Studies show that only about 48 percent of drivers operating large trucks buckle up, while passenger vehicle drivers in Michigan are at or above 90 percent usage rate.

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In 2003, 50 percent of the truck drivers killed in crashes nation-wide were not buckled up. Almost 80 percent of the truck drivers ejected from their vehicle during a crash were not wearing their safety belt. Truck drivers are more likely to survive a crash if wearing a safety belt as well as maintain control of their vehicle during a crash.

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