

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Practice Being Safe: Motor Vehicle Safety**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injuries and death for people between the ages of 1 and 33. The National Safety Council (2012) recommends several ways to reduce the likelihood of getting into an accident and staying alive by following these practices:

• Wear safety belts. Keep yourself and family safe by always buckling up.

• Avoid distractions. Distracted driving is a problem on the roadways. Eating, putting on makeup, getting dressed and fidgeting with children or pets are examples of various distractions that take someone’s eyes and mind off the road.

• Stay off cell phones. An increasing amount of accidents are involving cell phone use. Talking on a cell phone while driving makes someone four times more likely to crash, and texting while driving increases someone chances of crashing by up to 8 to 23 times.

• Keep infants and children safe. Motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death for children ages 1 to 12. The best way to protect them is to place all children in age- and size-appropriate car seats, booster seats and to know how to properly use the seat to reduce serious or fatal injuries. Car and booster seats should be used every time a child is in a car. Children should sit in the back seat at least through the age of 12.

• Keep teens safe. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for teens. Proper parental or guardian guidance in the learning-to-drive process is influential in a teen’s ability to become a safe, responsible driver. This includes modeling non-distracted driving and safety belt use.

• Keep seniors safe. Over the next 20 years, the number of senior drivers will increase 70 percent. The crash rates for drivers age 65 and older are higher than any age group except teens. Resources are available to help keep drivers safe, including self-assessment tools, education, driver refresher courses, and public transportation. Senior drivers also need to be aware of seatbelt safety, medication side effects and interactions, planning trips during low traffic times, driving a car that best fits their needs, and the newest highway laws and vehicle changes.

• Be aware of surroundings. Children are killed in and around vehicles each year, and all are preventable. Driveway back-overs and hot car deaths can easily be prevented by never leaving a child in or around a vehicle unattended. Be especially vigilant during hectic times, schedule changes, and holidays, because these busy times can often result in tragedy. Recalling where the vehicle is parked, having keys ready before walking to the car, and checking in and around a car before getting in. Once in a car, lock the doors.

• Don’t drive impaired. Impaired driving from drinking and/or drugs puts everyone on the road in danger and is a serious threat to communities throughout the nation. To prevent impaired driving, call a friend or taxi, designate someone in the group to drive who has not been drinking, and don’t let your friends drive drunk.

• Be a defensive driver. Speeding, frequent and unnecessary lane changes, tailgating and running red or yellow lights are examples of aggressive driving that result in putting yourself, family, and other drivers in danger. Instead, practice defensive driving techniques to save lives, time, and money.

• Keep the vehicle well maintained. Having vehicle serviced regularly reduces mechanical problems and break-downs. Along with regular oil changes, ensure windshield wipers are in good working order and fill the spare tire with air.

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