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*For Immediate Release*

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***Make the Summer click by always wearing seat belts and life jackets.***  
*State and local law enforcement officers ask everyone to buckle up on the road and water*

**(ATLANTA)** - Whether traveling on the road or the water, state and local law enforcement officers ask everyone to "Join the Click" by always wearing their seat belts in vehicles and life jackets when swimming or riding in a vessel on the water.

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Law Enforcement Division, GOHS Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (H.E.A.T.) units and GOHS Traffic Enforcement Networks are once again taking their safety message in a statewide tour prior to the extended Memorial Day holiday travel weekend. The statewide tour began this morning at Lake Lanier in Buford followed by stops at Lake Oliver in Columbus and Lake Blackshear near Cordele in south Georgia.

With more than one million Georgians expected to be on the road and thousands expected on Georgia waterways during the holiday weekend, state and local law enforcement officers ask everyone to make smart choices such as wearing seat belts when riding in vehicles and life jackets on the water and never operating a vehicle or vessel under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The Memorial Day Holiday weekend falls during the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) "Click It or Ticket" seat belt awareness and enforcement campaign. Federal crash data shows 58 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes in Georgia from 2019-2023 were not wearing seat belts.

"Mistakes are a part of human nature and mistakes on the road will often lead to a traffic crash, which is why we all need to wear a seat belt on every trip," Allen Poole, Director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety said. "Seat belts offer the best protection in the event of a crash because all the safety features in your vehicle are most effective when all the occupants are properly restrained."

According to preliminary state crash data, 16 people were killed in traffic crashes during the 2024 78-hour Memorial Day holiday weekend that began at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, May 24 and ended at 11:59 p.m. on Monday, May 27, which is 11 percent decrease over a five-year period when 18 people were killed in crashes during the 2020 Memorial Day Holiday weekend.

According to federal crash data, 58 percent of the passenger vehicle occupants killed crashes during the Memorial Day holiday weekend in Georgia from 2019 to 2023 were wearing seat belts while federal crash data showed 50 percent of the people killed in passenger vehicle crashes in Georgia over the five-year period from 2019-2023 were wearing seat belts.

The yearly Georgia daytime front seat observational seat belt survey showed a decline in seat belt use in Georgia since in recent years. While the 2024 survey found 88.7 percent of front seat occupants wearing seat belts is an increase from 87.4 percent in 2023, it is still below the nearly 96 percent of front seat occupants observed wearing seat belts in 2019.

State troopers and local law enforcement officers will be stepping up enforcement of all traffic laws including speeding, distracted driving, drunk and drugged driving and failure to wear a seat belt during the 78-hour holiday weekend, which begins with another round of the Georgia State Patrol's "Operation Observation" on Friday, May 23rd. Through a GOHS grant, state troopers will be conducting concentrated patrols on select days where they will target speeding, reckless driving, distracted driving and drunk and drugged driving.

"We want everyone to enjoy the Memorial Day weekend with their family and friends," Colonel William W. Hitchens, III, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety said. "An important part of this is making it to your destinations safely by avoiding distracted driving, observing speed limits, and not driving impaired. Additionally, always make sure you are buckled up and all of your passengers are in their seatbelts and child safety seats correctly."

This is National Boating Safety Week, and many Georgians are looking forward to being on the water for the first time this year during the holiday weekend. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division reminds all vessel operators that state law requires that all boats and personal watercraft (PWC) have a properly-fitting, U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket for each passenger. Children under 13 are required to wear a life jacket whenever the vessel is in motion, and all PWC occupants are required to wear a life jacket at all times.

During the Memorial Day weekend, Game Wardens will be conducting vessel safety checks and arresting any boater they find that is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Georgia law prohibits anyone from operating a motor vehicle, boat or personal watercraft with a Blood-Alcohol Concentration (BAC) level of .08 or higher.

According to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Division, 57 people drowned in the state in 2024 and Game Wardens investigated 137 boating incidents that killed 20 people and injured 52. Game Wardens also made 259 Boating Under the Influence (BUI) arrests in 2024.

“We want everyone to enjoy the summer on Georgia’s waterways,” said Colonel Mike England, director of Georgia DNR’s Law Enforcement Division. “But you must do it safely. The game wardens will be out there enforcing boating laws and reminding our citizens and visitors to practice safety. Stay alert and don’t boat while impaired, show common courtesy to others, and wear your life jackets.”

GOHS, Georgia State Patrol, GOHS Traffic Enforcement Networks, and GOHS Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (H.E.A.T.) units offer these safety reminders for those traveling during the Memorial Day holiday:

- Allow more time for your trip due to traffic
- Wear your seat belt and make sure all passengers are properly restrained
- Program navigation devices before getting on the road
- Take breaks as needed and check phones and other devices during rest stops
- Never drive under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs