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Governor's Highway Safety Office Launches Special Rural Roads Enforcement "Operation 28" Buckles Down on Belts and Speed

NASHVILLE – Governor's Highway Safety Office Director Kendell Poole joined local and state law enforcement agencies today to launch a special enforcement effort along Highway 28 in Marion and Sequatchie County called Operation 28. Since 1996, 40 people have died and more than 600 have been injured in crashes along a 30 mile stretch of Highway 28 in Marion and Sequatchie Counties. Operation 28 is part of a special high visibility *Click It or Ticket* enforcement effort across the state. Law enforcement agencies in Tennessee will be cracking down on those not buckled up, particularly along on rural roadways.

Motorists traveling on rural roads face a much greater risk of being injured or killed in a traffic crash than motorists in urban areas. About a quarter of the U.S. population lives in rural areas yet more than half of all traffic deaths occur on rural roadways.

In Tennessee, 62 percent of the 776 people killed in car crashes in 2008 were in rural areas. A large contributing factor is low seat belt use in pickup trucks. In 2008, 72 percent of the pickup truck occupants who died in a traffic crash were not restrained at the time of the crash.

"In addition to rural motorists, teen drivers, particularly young males, and pickup truck drivers and passengers are most at risk of dying in a traffic crash," said GHSO Director Kendell Poole. "We must do all we can to protect ourselves and our passengers during the busy Thanksgiving holiday travel season. Wear a safety belt every time you travel and make sure others in your vehicles buckle up as well, and talk to teens about the importance of buckling up every time they get into an automobile."

Studies show that rural drivers also tend to speed along roadways they are accustomed to driving. The chances of death or serious injury double for every 10 miles per hour a driver travels over 50 mph. Data proves crash involvement rates are almost six times greater for vehicles traveling 10 mph above or below the average speed.

"Obeying the speed limit and wearing seat belts clearly save lives," said Tennessee Highway Patrol Lieutenant Jeff Mosley. "Unfortunately too many drivers in Tennessee and particularly those in our rural counties, still need a tough reminder. We are committed to doing everything we can to convince drivers to live by the law to save their lives and those of their loved ones during the holiday season and every day."

Law enforcement agencies across the state will be participating in special enforcement efforts leading up to the Thanksgiving travel holiday. 52 law enforcement agencies in 19 Tennessee counties are participating. The counties involved are: Anderson, Wayne, Franklin, Macon, Clay, Pickett, Overton, Jackson, Smith, DeKalb, White, Fentress, Morgan, Jefferson, Monroe, Bledsoe, Grundy, Marion and Sequatchie. Counties were selected based on both low seatbelt usage and a high unbelted fatality rate.

Poole reminded motorists, "No more warnings and no more excuses. No matter who you are or where you are on the road, if you don't want to risk a ticket, or more importantly your life, *Click It or Ticket*."

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