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Contacts: Jennifer Kuntch, PennDOT, jkuntch@pa.gov
Myles Snyder, PSP, 717-783-5556 or ra-pspcomm@pa.gov
Ruth Miller, PEMA, ruthmiller@pa.gov
Rosanne Placey, PTC, 717-675-4362 or Renee Colborn, 724-755-5260
Jonathan Guseman, National Weather Service, 814-954-6384 or jonathan.guseman@noaa.gov
Doni Lee Spiegel, AAA, 717-880-4074

Shapiro Administration Promotes Holiday Travel Safety

Operation Safe Holiday kick off today with the “Click it or Ticket” Thanksgiving Enforcement Mobilization, aiming to keep Pennsylvania’s youngest travelers safe on the road

Harrisburg, PA – With holiday travel just around the corner, the Shapiro Administration is reminding drivers to wear their seat belts, drive sober, and eliminate distractions behind the wheel. Today, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PA Turnpike), National Weather Service (NWS), and AAA came together today to remind drivers to wear their seat belts, drive sober, and eliminate distractions behind the wheel.

“We must all do our part to prevent crashes and fatalities,” said **PennDOT Executive Deputy Secretary Cheryl Moon-Sirianni**. “No matter how far or near you travel, we want everyone to arrive safely. Please designate a sober driver this holiday season. And buckle up! Your seat belt is your best defense against reckless drivers.”

Operation Safe Holiday kicks off today with the “Click It or Ticket” Thanksgiving Enforcement Mobilization running through November 26. Aiming to keeping Pennsylvania’s youngest travelers safe on the road, PSP will hold [child safety seat fitting clinics](#) at several locations across the state.

“Correct use of child safety seats and booster seats is paramount to preventing injuries and fatalities in a crash. To ensure child safety seats are properly installed, our trained child passenger safety technicians ensure your child is properly secured in an age-appropriate seat excluded from all recalls,” said **PSP Commissioner Colonel Christopher Paris**. “Failing to secure a child in a safety seat is a serious matter. Drivers who place children in danger by ignoring this law will be cited.”

Pennsylvania law requires any occupant younger than 18 to buckle up when riding in a vehicle, as well as drivers and front-seat passengers. Children under the age of two must be secured in a rear-facing car seat, and children under the age of four must be restrained in an approved child safety seat. Children must ride in a booster seat until their eighth birthday.

Throughout Operation Safe Holiday, law enforcement will also conduct sobriety checkpoints, roving patrols, and regular traffic safety patrols beginning the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, November 22, through the New Year’s holiday to crack down on drivers impaired by drugs or alcohol.

According to PennDOT data, during the 2022 holiday travel period beginning the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and running through January 2, 2023, there were 1,111 alcohol-related crashes, resulting in 41 fatalities and 661 suspected serious injuries. During the same timeframe, there were 387 drug-related crashes, resulting in 44 fatalities and 287 suspected serious injuries.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission is once again expecting big numbers over the Thanksgiving holiday. Approximately 3.3 million motorists are expected to be traveling the PA Turnpike during the six-day holiday period starting on Tuesday, November 21 through Sunday, November 26 with Tuesday and Wednesday looking to be the heaviest travel days. Motorists experiencing any issues while traveling the PA Turnpike, such as debris on the roadway, medical emergencies, or a disabled vehicle, can always dial *11 on their mobile phones to reach a PA Turnpike traffic operator and get help. The PA Turnpike traffic operations center is staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week to assist all customers.

“With this much traffic on our system, we want every driver paying attention to the roadway as they travel,” said **PA Turnpike COO Craig Shuey**. “Distracted driving, whether it’s texting, talking or some other activity that takes your attention from the roadway can have major implications. Remember to also keep plenty of space between you and the vehicles in front of you in case you need to react. Stay smart and get to your holiday destination safely.”

“With over 49 million travelers expected to drive to their holiday destinations this Thanksgiving, travelers should be prepared for very busy roadways – especially in and around major metropolitan areas,” said **AAA Central Penn Marketing and Public Relations Director Nate Pigott**. “Planning ahead, by monitoring when and where roadways are growing congested, can help minimize holiday traffic frustrations. AAA advises drivers to know-before-you-go by using traffic mobile apps, local department of transportation notifications and 511 services for real-time roadway updates.”

The agencies also reminded drivers of the threat that snow squalls can pose during the winter months and advised them to observe warnings related to these dangerous weather hazards during Snow Squall Awareness Week, November 13-17.

According to the [NWS](#), a snow squall is a brief but intense period of heavy snow (up to 2 inches in 30 minutes), strong winds (30+ mph), and whiteout conditions (visibility less than ¼ mile). Snow squalls often occur on days with otherwise partly cloudy skies. Coming on so suddenly, snow squalls can catch drivers off guard and lead to major transportation impacts, including deadly multi-vehicle accidents.

"It's critically important for drivers to be weather aware when they head out during the winter months," said **PEMA Director Randy Padfield**. "We all have a role to play in being prepared, and that includes making sure you have a basic set of emergency supplies in your car like water, food, and blankets, especially if you have children or pets."

"The National Weather Service issues Snow Squall Warnings as a means to save lives and prevent property loss by alerting for the sudden onset of life-threatening conditions encountered by highway travelers during snow squalls," said **Central Pennsylvania National Weather Service Meteorologist-in-Charge Ashley Evans**. "When a Snow Squall Warning is issued, we encourage folks to delay travel or if already traveling, exit the roadway at the next opportunity. If you get caught driving in a snow squall, avoid slamming on the brakes, turn on the headlights and hazard lights, stay in your lane, and increase following distance. There is no safe place on a highway during a snow squall."

PennDOT, PA Turnpike, and PEMA outlined winter preparations and guidance for public readiness during an [event last month](#).

Motorists can check conditions on more than 40,000 roadway miles, including color-coded winter conditions on 2,900 miles, by visiting www.511PA.com. 511PA, which is free and available 24 hours a day, provides traffic delay warnings, weather forecasts, traffic speed information, and access to more than 1,000 traffic cameras.

511PA is also available through a free smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by [following local alerts on X](#).

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The holiday seat belt and impaired driving enforcement are funded through PennDOT's statewide annual distribution from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. For more information on PennDOT's highway safety efforts visit, www.PennDOT.pa.gov/safety.

To learn more about the PA Turnpike safety, visit www.PATurnpike.com/rampup/safety-keys.

For more information on the Pennsylvania State Police, visit psp.pa.gov.

Editor's Note: Photos and video from the event will be available at PACast.com.

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