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THIRTEEN PEOPLE KILLED ON VIRGINIA ROADS DURING THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

RICHMOND – Traffic fatalities increased during the 2009 Labor Day holiday compared to last year but fatalities overall are on the decline for the year. During the four-day statistical counting period, preliminary numbers reveal that thirteen individuals died in eleven traffic crashes. The victims range in age from two to 63 years of age. Last year, seven people were killed in traffic crashes compared to 22 lives that were lost during the 2007 Labor Day weekend.

“It is discouraging to see fatalities escalate during the Labor Day weekend, during a time when the Commonwealth is largely experiencing a drop in fatalities,” says Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, Virginia State Police Superintendent. “What this says is, the need is still there to remind drivers they are taking their own lives, their passengers’ and other motorists’ lives into their own hands when they get behind the wheel. State police cannot emphasize enough the importance of putting safety first, so you or your loved one doesn’t become the next statistic on Virginia’s roads.”

Four of the crashes involved motorcycles and occurred in the City of Suffolk and the counties of James City, Patrick, and Pittsylvania. Of the remaining four passengers and five drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes, one passenger and two drivers were not wearing safety belts. The nine fatalities took place in the City of Newport News, and the Town of Vienna, and the counties of Buchanan, Fairfax, James City, Lee, and Prince William. Alcohol was a factor in two of the vehicles crashes, one motorcycle crash, and unknown in four others.

Throughout the Labor Day weekend, Virginia State Police participated in *Operation C.A.R.E.* (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) and *Checkpoint Strikeforce*, an enforcement and educational campaign aimed at raising awareness about the deadly dangers of impaired driving. Operation C.A.R.E. is a state-sponsored, national program designed to reduce crashes, fatalities and injuries caused by speeding, impaired driving and failure to use occupant restraints.

During the 2009 Labor Day statistical counting period, Virginia State Police:

- Patrolled 325,570 miles
- Assisted 2,969 motorists
- Stopped 9,386 speeders
- Cited 2,587 reckless drivers
- Arrested 90 impaired drivers
- Cited 827 safety belt violations & 251 child restraint violations
- Responded to 621 total traffic crashes.

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