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OPERATION AIR, LAND & SPEED RETURNS TO VIRGINIA INTERSTATES

State Police Targets Interstates 295, 85, 77, and Pocahontas 895

RICHMOND – Motorists will see an increase in Virginia State Police troopers along Interstates 295, 85, 77 and for the first time the Pocahontas 895 Toll Road. On Sunday, June 21 and Monday, June 22, state police will saturate the entire length of the targeted highways during the two-day enforcement blitz. The traffic safety initiative is intended to remind people of the need to slow down, buckle up, and drive safely and responsibly on Virginia’s interstates through high-visibility enforcement.

This next phase of Operation Air, Land and Speed begins the same day as the summer season gets underway.

“As we head into the summer driving months, we continue to urge motorists to drive defensively, keep your guard up and to drive distraction free when they get behind the wheel,” says Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, Virginia State Police Superintendent. “Wearing your seatbelt is one of the first safeguards an individual should take when they operate or ride in a four-thousand pound vehicle.”

In February 2008, *Operation Air, Land and Speed* yielded 1,033 summonses and arrests on Interstates 295, 85, and 77. The 53 mile section of I-295 produced a total of 477 summonses and arrests during the two-day enforcement initiative. Troopers stopped 200 speeders and 120 reckless drivers. Eighteen safety belt violations were cited and three felony arrests were made.

The same February operation generated a total of 474 summonses and arrests along the entire 69 miles of I-85. The summonses and arrests included the following: 188 speeders, 148 reckless drivers, and one drunk driver. Troopers also cited ten safety belt violations and made seven felony arrests.

Additionally, the special traffic safety effort concentrated on Interstate 77 and resulted in 82 summonses and arrests. The breakdown includes: 52 speeders, six reckless drivers and eight safety belt violations.

This is the third *Operation Air, Land and Speed* for 2009 and the third time I-295, I-85 and I-77 have been the focus of this traffic safety effort since the project’s inception in 2006.

Because *Operation Air, Land and Speed* involves additional troopers on the road, the Department of State Police continues to remind motorists to comply with Virginia’s “Move Over” law, during the traffic safety project. The “Move Over” law requires drivers to change to another travel lane or, when not able to, to cautiously pass emergency personnel stopped on the side of the road.



“As troopers work to keep you safe during special enforcement operations, motorists need to keep our troopers’ safety in mind as individuals drive along the interstate,” adds Colonel Flaherty.

State police operational duties on other interstates, primary and secondary roads will not be affected during the operation. Funding for the enforcement initiative is provided through federal highway safety monies.

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