



News Release No. 52

For Immediate Release: December 3, 2009

VIRGINIA STATE POLICE RESUMES ANOTHER ROUND OF OPERATION AIR, LAND AND SPEED *Interstates 64 & 66 Focus of Specialized Enforcement Patrols*

RICHMOND – The highly visible *Operation Air, Land and Speed* intended to enhance highway safety and reduce traffic fatalities returns Dec. 4, 2009, and Dec. 5, 2009 on Interstate 64 and Interstate 66. Increased uniform patrols will stretch across the east-west borders of both interstates during the two day traffic safety initiative.

“Speed and reckless and distracted driving endanger too many lives on the Commonwealth’s roads,” says Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, Virginia State Police Superintendent. “Every motorist must remember to buckle up and drive defensively not aggressively while they are behind the wheel, especially during the holiday season.”

The last time *Operation Air, Land and Speed* concentrated on I-64 and I-66 was Dec. 5-6, 2008. During the 2008 initiative on I-64, troopers cited: 1,783 speeders, 251 reckless drivers and 227 safety belt violations. In addition, troopers took two drunk drivers off I-64 and made 22 drug/felony arrests. Along I-66 last year, Virginia State Police issued the following citations to motorists: 683 for speeding, 123 for reckless driving, and 49 for failing to buckle up. Troopers also arrested two drunk drivers and made one drug/felony arrest.

Virginia State Police receives federal funding for the highway traffic safety program. All troopers involved in *Operation Air, Land and Speed* are working on their off-days to participate in the comprehensive enforcement project. The program utilizes troopers, supervisors, motorcycle units and motor carrier troopers. Regular state police operational duties on other interstates, primary and secondary roads will not be affected during the operation. The premise of *Operation Air, Land, & Speed* is to keep motorists safe and promote responsible driver behaviors.

“During these challenging fiscal times, it’s important this kind of concentrated enforcement effort continues to take place. Unfortunately, the only way to get some drivers to adopt safer driving habits and behaviors is through stepped up enforcement projects like *Operation Air, Land and Speed*,” adds Colonel Flaherty.

Virginia State Police has conducted five *Operation Air, Land and Speed* projects in 2009. Since the program’s inception in 2006, there have been 21 previous phases of the operation. The last enforcement effort occurred Oct. 18, 2009, and Oct. 19, 2009, along I-81 and I-95.

During the October safety initiative, troopers cited 1,890 speeders on I-81, stopped 208 reckless drivers and made four DUI arrests. Along I-95, state police pulled over 1,320 drivers for speeding, issued summonses to 298 for reckless driving and arrested 11 drunk drivers.

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