**COVID-19-Related Traffic Safety Messaging**

1. **There may be less traffic because of the pandemic’s effect on activities, jobs and other events, but it’s still so important for Minnesotans to make wise choices on the road.**

* Whether it’s a traffic stop or a crash, poor decisions behind the wheel take up valuable resources. Let’s all do our part to make sure hospital beds are available for COVID-19 patients and not being taken up because of careless decisions on the road.
* Officers, troopers and deputies have received increased reports of aggressive driving and significant speeding violations, some more than 100 mph.

1. **Sadly, the stats support how deadly the roads have become in Minnesota during the pandemic.**

* From March 16 – Sept. 29:
* Fatal crashes and fatalities have increased with 242 lives lost this year compared with 212 during this time last year.
* While a crash can have more than one contributing factor, speed was the most frequently cited factor.
* Preliminary reports show speed has already contributed to 83 people dying on Minnesota roads in 2020 as of Sept. 29 compared with 58 at this time last year.
* All fatal crashes and fatalities for March 16-Sept. 29:
* 2020: 226 (242 deaths)
* 2019: 192 (212 deaths)
* 2018: 201 (219 deaths)
* 2017: 204 (213 deaths)
* 2016: 192 (209 deaths)
* 2015: 223 (245 deaths)

1. **Let’s all commit to going the speed limit, driving distraction free, wearing our seat belt and always lining up a sober ride.**

* You can safely get to your destination and not risk the lives of other motorists by slowing down and driving less aggressively.
* Drive Smart: park the phone and put other distractions away.
  + The new hands-free cell phone law allows a driver to use their cell phone to make calls, text, listen to music or podcasts and get directions, but only by voice commands or single-touch activation without holding the phone.
  + Fines include $100 or more including court fees for a first offenses and $300 or more including court fees for a second and/or subsequent offense.
* Expect the unexpected and buckle up, even if you are a great driver.
* Plan for a safe ride, and speak up to find a safe ride home for an impaired person.