

Remarks prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

FARS 2009 Press Event

Washington, DC

September 9, 2010

“Momentum Is Building”

**Thank you Mr. Secretary. I would also like to thank
our State highway safety partners and law
enforcement agencies across the country, without**

whose efforts these gains would not have been possible.

While we have seen improvements across the board, I wanted to highlight three priority targets in more detail: impaired driving, motorcycles, and pedestrian safety.

Nationally, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities dropped 7.4 percent, from 11,711 in 2008 to 10,839 deaths in 2009. But national numbers don't tell the whole story. Drunk driving is a local problem, and the numbers we are releasing today show continued progress but also

reveal how much more still needs to be done all over America.

Our new data shows that 33 States and Puerto Rico mirrored the national trend, with decreases in the number of alcohol-impaired driving deaths. However, the rest of the States showed an increase in the number of alcohol-impaired driving deaths.

I am sure that citizens and safety practitioners across the country share our view that we should not be satisfied until our communities are safe from this deadly crime. We will not be satisfied until innocent, decent, law-abiding people are safe from tragic

injuries and loss of their loved ones because someone makes the irresponsible choice to drive while impaired.

I can share some good news with you. We are encouraged by the decline in overall motorcycle deaths. There are still too many riders dying on the road, but following 11 consecutive years of increases, 2009 saw that number drop to 4,462, a decline of 16 percent from 2008. I am encouraged to see that the number of motorcyclists injured declined by 6.3 percent in that same period of time.

Pedestrian deaths and injuries are trending downward. We saw a 7.3 percent decline to 4,092 deaths and a 14 percent decline to 59,000 injured in 2009. We are increasing our focus pedestrian safety at the Agency as a component of the Secretary's livability program and hope our demonstration safety projects will help us continue to push the numbers down in this area.

Momentum is building on many levels in highway safety. Any good strategist will tell you that this is the time to redouble our efforts. Decades of experience with seat belts and drunk driving has taught us it takes consistency in leadership from elected officials at

all levels of government, comprehensive strategies, public education, effective enforcement and adjudication, and grassroots advocacy, to improve safety performance.

Under President Obama and Secretary LaHood's leadership, the men and women of NHTSA will not relent on any of our safety efforts. Safety is the department's top priority, and as the nation's highway safety Agency, we are on point. Thank you.