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PRESS RELEASE

New Mexico Department of Transportation Kicks Off “Click. Don’t Splat!” Video Contest

Albuquerque – The New Mexico Department of Transportation is inviting teenagers to submit video commercials as part of a contest to kick off the new seat belt campaign aimed at young people -- *Click. Don’t Splat!*

“Prom and graduation season is upon us and sadly this exciting time also often includes news headlines reporting tragic vehicle crashes involving young people not wearing seat belts,” said Transportation Secretary Girón. “Our goal through this new campaign is to catch their attention and save more lives by motivating teen drivers and passengers to buckle up.”

At a news conference today, transportation officials announced a video contest that encourages teens to create short videos that convince and motivate their peers to wear seat belts. The contest begins today and the deadline to submit the entries is May 8. For details and contest rules, please visit www.clickdentsplat.com.

Click. Don’t Splat! is a two-phase campaign that includes: education – teaching teens about the need to buckle up for safety and also because it’s the law; and enforcement – stepped up seat belt enforcement to crack down on teen violators.

NMDOT is teaming up with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to launch this campaign. According to NHTSA, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of fatalities among teens in the United States. In 2007 alone, 4,450 passengers and vehicle occupants 16-20 years old were killed in motor vehicle crashes, of that more than half were unrestrained. Such crashes claimed the lives of 36 teens in New Mexico last year and over 273 were injured.

Law enforcement officers will be increasing patrols and enforcement zones in eight high-risk counties from May 11- 17, focusing their efforts in areas that are heavily traveled by teens and handing out tough fines to teen violators. Counties participating in this campaign include Bernalillo, Dona Ana, San Juan, Lea, McKinley, Rio Arriba, Sandoval and Valencia.

A new teen website – www.clickdentsplat.com – was launched today and features resources on safe driving as well as an interactive quiz to test seat belt knowledge. Visitors to the site can earn a free music download after taking the quiz. The campaign is modeled after successful campaigns implemented in Colorado and Nevada to increase seat belt use in high-risk teenagers.

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