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Contact: Bruce Nyquist, (802) 828-2696, [bruce.nyquist@vermont.gov](mailto:bruce.nyquist@vermont.gov)

### **Not Buckling Up, Driving Impaired and Speeding Leading to Increased Highway Fatalities**

MONTPELIER, Vt. – August 26, 2016— Highway fatalities to date on Vermont roads have nearly doubled compared to this time last year, with the majority of fatal crashes involving non-use or improper seatbelt usage, speeding, and/or driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs or both, according to the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans).

Deaths on Vermont roads increased by 68 percent in the first six months of 2016, compared to the same period in 2015. The United States lost over 35,000 lives on our roadways in 2015 – 57 of those were in Vermont. To date this year, 40 lives have been lost.

“Last year we had historically low numbers through the second quarter, but then we had a few above average months in a row,” said Bruce Nyquist, Director of the Office of Highway Safety for VTTrans. “We must continue to focus on impaired driving, speed, distracted driving and occupant protection, while also ensuring that our vulnerable users, motorcyclists and work zones are safe.”

Of the reported motor vehicle highway fatalities in Vermont so far this year, 64 percent of occupants were unbelted, compared to 47 percent who were unbelted in 2015.

Impairment by alcohol, drugs or both was a contributing factor in almost half of this year’s fatal crashes in Vermont – a trend that matches that of 2015.

Aggressive driving, speed and distracted driving have also factored into the number of lives lost on Vermont roads, with speed being a suspected factor in 18 highway fatalities so far this year.

Scott Davidson, Highway Safety Program Chief for the Vermont Governor’s Highway Safety Program, said, “In promoting the “Toward Zero Deaths” philosophy, we believe that one death on Vermont roads is too many. We are committed to our critical role to ensure safe travel on Vermont’s roadways by promoting safe driving behavior.”

VTTrans works closely with state police, county sheriff’s departments and municipal police departments, who will be increasing efforts to enforce impaired driving over Labor Day Weekend as part of their Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over campaign.

For more information on highway safety in Vermont, visit [vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/safety](http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/safety).