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Bureau of Highway Safety
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Dear Editor,

In response to a rise in motor vehicle crashes and subsequent fatalities in Maine, I write this letter to ask all Mainers,

WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR HURRY?

Have you ever considered how many traffic fatalities, on Maine roads, are acceptable to you? Is it 100? Is it 50? Is it 25? As of today, 112 people have died on Maine roads since January 1st. That is 112 people who did not arrive at their destination safely leaving behind, and likely shattering the emotional lives of the people that loved them. 112 people who will not attend holiday celebrations, birthday parties, weddings, or family gatherings. How can any number greater than zero be acceptable?

Safe driving cannot be the sole responsibility of federal and state government entities, auto manufacturers, legislators, law enforcement officers, or driving instructors. Safe driving is the responsibility of each one of us that uses the public roads for transportation as a condition of our privilege to drive. We each must have a conscious and vested interest in being responsible road users and genuinely caring about the people we are sharing the road with, and we must keep that spirit of sharing and caring in the forefront of our minds, always, when driving. After all, the people sharing the road with you are someone's grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, sons and daughters, and anyone of them could be yours. Treat them as if they are yours.

What does that really mean?

It means making good choices and decisions when behind the wheel. It means taking your single most important task – *driving* – as seriously as you would take any other dangerous activity that you are going to engage in like using a chainsaw, hunting, or white water rafting all of which require pre-planning to ensure your safety. Just because you may drive every day does not make it a less dangerous activity.

It means ensuring that you and your passengers are appropriately secured with seat belts or child restraints. It means ensuring that you are wearing the best available safety gear when biking or motorcycling or wearing bright and reflective clothing when walking.

It means ensuring that you are awake, alert, not distracted, and sober when planning to get behind the wheel. It means anticipating roadway hazards and people pulling out in front of you. It means looking out for animals and people on the sides of the road, and it means thinking about what is on the other side of the bend in the road or crest of a hill that you can't yet see.

Buckle Up. Drive Safely.



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It means driving defensively, not aggressively. Remember that people are human, and humans are not perfect. Anticipate that the people around you may make mistakes, and may be unsure of where they are going, so give them some grace and distance.

And it means SLOW DOWN! Speeding has accounted for 27% of fatal crashes in the last five years in Maine and that equates to 216 people that we will never see again. Speeding is a selfish act even when it doesn't seriously injure or kill someone. Speeding means that you probably didn't leave enough time to account for lower speed limits, increased traffic, roadway construction, or any other factor that is out of your control. If you're in a hurry to get wherever you are destined, then you're likely thinking about you and only you, which is taking your focus off your safe driving. Even small increases in speed can increase the risk of injury and death for drivers and passengers. Higher driving speeds increase braking distance and provide less time to process information and then to act on it.

So, what role will you play in helping Maine achieve zero roadway fatalities? What exactly is your hurry and is it worth your life or the life of another person?

For more information on safe driving, visit www.maine.gov/dps/bhs or www.nhtsa.gov.

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