



Maine Bureau of  
Highway Safety

# THE MAINE LIAISON



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## Increasing Maine's seatbelt usage rates

Welcome back to fall! Jim and I are pleased to share this issue of The Maine Liaison with all of you who have an affinity for traffic safety. During the summer of 2025, the Bureau of Highway Safety partnered again with the Catherine Cutler Institute at the University of Southern Maine to conduct our annual seatbelt usage survey. Dozens of locations from Kittery to Fort Kent were under observation for occupant belt use, passenger belt use, and child restraint use during the month of June. The results recorded our seatbelt usage rate of 92.2%, the lowest in four years. Seatbelt use remains one of the best ways to limit injuries and fatalities in roadway crashes. In an effort to raise awareness and increase seatbelt usage rates across our state, Director Stewart has asked us to share an informational letter from her office explaining what opportunities grant funds can provide with occupant protection and how those funds can be used in other highway safety programs. Her letter is contained further in this newsletter.

## Your LEL Contacts:

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# YTD Traffic Fatalities

As we look at summer in the rearview mirror, we've had a tremendous stretch of sunny days with very little precipitation sprinkled across the state. Good weather might be a contributing factor to why fatal motorcycle crashes have been on the rise. Pedestrian fatal crashes have now doubled last year's numbers, and fatal crashes involving our seniors continue to rise. Commercial motor vehicle involved crashes are at an all time high in the past five years. We at BHS are here to help support the good work of local, county and state law enforcement to drive all of these numbers to zero!

TRAFFIC FATALITIES	
<b>Traffic Fatalities through: October 1, 2025</b>	
<b>135</b>	
<small>comparable prior years through October 1 of respective year</small>	
*2024	*2023
139	98
*2022	*2021
131	110

The Maine OUI Guide (5th ed.)
September 2025



Original Version - July 2020  
Edited, Annotated, and Researched by:  
Scot Mattox, Esq.  
Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor  
Maine Bureau of Highway Safety  
Lori Renzullo, Esq.  
Additional Research by:  
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2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Edits and Additions by:  
Joshua K. Saucier, Esq. & Scot Mattox, Esq.  
Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors  
Maine Bureau of Highway Safety




RIGHT NOW 50 MILLION  
VEHICLES ON THE ROAD HAVE OPEN SAFETY RECALLS  
Is yours one of them?

CHECK TO PROTECT



DRIVE SAFE



MaineDOT  
Traffic Camera Link

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Maine OUI Guide is now available. The "Guide" discusses commonly encountered situations in typical impaired driving scenarios and applies relevant case law, statutory law, law enforcement training material, and empirical data to assist practitioners. To access a digital copy, [use this link](#). Also available are the SFST pocket guides. These can be obtained from MCJA or your LEL's.

## BUREAU OF HIGHWAY SAFETY

### *Coordinators Corner*

#### Programmatic Updates

Our regularly scheduled grant application and grant reimbursement workshops have concluded for the upcoming 2026 federal fiscal year. If your agency would like to seek BHS grant funding and missed either of these required workshops, please reach out to any BHS coordinator or your LEL's who can work with you to seek FY26 grant funds.

#### Forensic Phlebotomy

Our most current on call list of trained FP professionals can be found [HERE](#).

For more information about the Forensic Phlebotomy program, please contact

[Kasey.Theriault@Maine.gov](mailto:Kasey.Theriault@Maine.gov).



## Our Team, we're here to help!

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# BUREAU OF HIGHWAY SAFETY

## *Coordinators Corner*

**TAKE 5 BEFORE YOU DRIVE**

**DRIVER OR PASSENGER, TAKE 5.  
IT'S YOUR RIDE, YOUR RULES,  
YOUR SAFETY.**

- 93 NUMBER OF TEEN DRIVERS KILLED ON MAINE ROADWAYS IN THE LAST TEN YEARS
- 51 PERCENT OF THOSE TEENS WERE SPEEDING
- 40 PERCENT OF THOSE TEENS WERE NOT WEARING THEIR SEATBELTS
- ! THE ANNUAL AVERAGE OF TEEN DEATHS ON MAINE ROADWAYS HAS DOUBLED IN THE LAST 5 YEARS

**TAKE THE PLEDGE TO "TAKE 5"  
BEFORE HITTING THE ROAD!**

Scan the QR code to fill out the pledge form and start tracking your habits!

[www.maine.gov/dps/bhs](http://www.maine.gov/dps/bhs)

Follow us on:  

\*Printed using NHTSA Funds

The Bureau of Highway Safety is asking drivers and passengers to pledge to "Take 5" to perform safety-related activities before getting into a vehicle.

By pledging to "Take 5" every time we get into a vehicle and doing so at least 60 times, we will form better habits, which will help us slow down, be prepared and ultimately be better drivers and passengers.

Example activities:

- send/make last-minute texts and calls
- check gas gauge
- ensure location/directions
- allow extra time
- check that you have all belongings
- put seatbelt on

There is also an optional tracking log to keep track of activities. Just drive!

To receive "Take 5" posters and pledge-card handouts or to learn more about the program, please contact [Tracy.Johnson@Maine.gov](mailto:Tracy.Johnson@Maine.gov) or (207) 509-0809.



# THE MAINE LIAISON



Janet T. Mills  
Governor

STATE OF MAINE  
Department of Public Safety  
*Bureau of Highway Safety*  
164 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine  
04333-0164



Michael J. Sauschuck  
Commissioner

Lauren V. Stewart  
Director

September 8, 2025

Maine Chiefs and Sheriffs,

Motor vehicle fatalities in Maine are not declining. In fact, they have been on the increase since 2022 when we had the highest number since 2007. As of today, 115 people have lost their lives on a Maine roadway. Twenty-five of those were unbelted.

While we know that speeding, aggressive driving, distraction, and impairment play a key role in these fatal crashes, sadly we also see fewer people using seat belts. Our observed seat belt usage rate study supports this by showing an annual decline in seat belt users. In 2023, we had the highest rate at 94.5% and as of 2025, we are down to 92.2%. Wearing a seat belt is the single simplest act that has been proven to save lives.

We also see less interest in grant funded seat belt enforcement and subsequent violations. According to our citation dashboard, 3,578 seat belt violations have been written since 2022 compared to 51,243 for speeding and 7,337 for distraction. Agencies supporting the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) two-week high visibility enforcement (HVE) Click it or Ticket (CIOT) campaign have dwindled since 2022. So far, for 2026, we are looking at a mere 15 agencies willing to conduct two weeks of high visibility enforcement for seat belt violators.

In the HVE model, law enforcement focuses on selected high-crash or high-violation locations, corridors, or geographical areas for enhanced enforcement, and publicize their enforcement efforts widely to maximize general deterrence of bad driving behaviors beyond those who are stopped. If done well, such a campaign should be perceived as fair, since drivers are being put on notice that the enforcement is occurring, and that it is being done to improve safety and to save lives. The objective is to have lots of blue lights all around the state during the same period, helping to generate conversation about what is happening and to convince the driving public that irresponsible driving behavior is likely to be detected and therefore not worth the risk of receiving fines, points, or other punishment.

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Buckle Up. Drive Safely.

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# THE MAINE LIAISON



Janet T. Mills  
Governor

STATE OF MAINE  
Department of Public Safety  
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164 State House Station  
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04333-0164



Michael J. Sauschuck  
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Lauren V. Stewart  
Director

For seat belts, this highly visible enforcement model is usually conducted annually for two weeks at the end of May (through Memorial Day) and the beginning of June. If supported statewide, with lots of blue lights and your agency press announcements, it should be enough to move the needle in the right direction.

The NHTSA CIOT two-week HVE runs May 18-May 31, 2026. Would you consider conducting HVE (grant funded or not) during this two-week campaign? Will you help us support the campaign and do our best to reverse the decline in usage and increase the number of lives saved?

Did you know that as a high-belt-rate state (90% observed usage or above) the Bureau is afforded the ability to flex up to 90% of our federally awarded seat belt funding to other uses such as in-cruiser printers for eCitation or radars for speed patrols? So, while saving lives is our number one priority, the ability to flex that funding to other uses is critical to ensuring that we can continue to support our partners in other meaningful ways beyond just overtime details.

It is not too late to apply for funding. If you can spare two weeks at the beginning of next summer, please reach out directly to me, to one of our LEL's, or any one of our highway safety coordinators. We will assist with your application, your data analysis if needed, relevant campaign materials, and we will supply you with templates for your own press releases.

I sincerely appreciate all that you do for traffic safety, and I hope you will consider CIOT for May of 2026.

Sincerely,

Lauren V. Stewart, Director

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Buckle Up. Drive Safely.

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## **The Role of High Visibility Enforcement: Impaired Driving as an Example**

September 30, 2025

Joshua Saucier, Assistant TSRP

As a patrol officer, have you ever wondered why saturation patrol details were only available at a particular time of year or why they were available at all? As an administrator, have you ever wondered why you were expected to commit so many officers to work a single shift focused on reducing impaired driving? These and many other questions arise often when officers and departments consider highway safety grants and the funding related thereto. This article will address those and other questions, and it is intended to promote understanding and recognition of the part that each of us plays in saving lives on Maine's roadways.

When it comes to preventing unwanted or dangerous conduct within any population – including impaired driving - deterrence[1] is a leading factor.[2] Naturally, the greater the deterrent effect of any particular action, the more effective that action will be in preventing impaired driving. It may surprise readers that the greatest deterring factor when it comes to impaired driving is not punishment itself, but the likelihood of getting caught.[3] Let me reiterate that point: the single biggest factor in deterring the populous from driving impaired is the belief of individuals that they will be caught.[4]

Thus and relatedly, increasing the general belief in the population that they will be caught if they drive impaired does more to deter impaired driving than any other known act.[5] Even increasing penalties for impaired driving does comparatively little – after a point – to increase deterrence.[6]

So, how do we increase the belief of the public that they will be caught if they drive impaired? The answer is probably what you expect: high-visibility enforcement.[1] Sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols alike have been shown to increase the public's belief that they will be caught if they drive impaired. That belief, in turn, increases the deterrent effect of these law enforcement activities.

Continued to next page.



## The Role of High Visibility Enforcement: Impaired Driving as an Example continued

Such high-visibility enforcement is particularly effective at deterring impaired driving when it is combined with public media campaigns.[2] Indeed, research shows that mass media campaigns combined with ongoing prevention activities – such as high-visibility enforcement – were, on average, associated with a 13% reduction in alcohol related crashes.[3]

So, when you are wondering why saturation patrol shifts are only available at a certain time of year or why, as an administrator, you are expected to commit to so many details, know that there is both reason and, indeed, science behind the availability and the requirements. The timing and staffing requirements allow the public media campaigns that occur at certain times of year to be combined with high visibility enforcement. In this way, your law enforcement action saves more lives than it otherwise could, even if you catch zero impaired drivers. That activity, combined with those media campaigns, stops impaired driving before it happens.

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[1] While we are all familiar with the idea of deterrence, it is good to revisit the definition when discussing it. Deterrence has two broad forms: general and specific. General deterrence is the fear of punishment: that people will consider the potential consequences of driving while impaired and decide not to because of the punishment that they might face. Specific deterrence is similar except that it focuses on the individual. It is the idea that punishing one individual will keep that same person from committing the same crime.

[2] Countermeasures that Work: Alcohol-Impaired Driving: Understanding the Problem, Nat'l Hwy Traffic Sfty Admin. (last accessed Sept. 11, 2025).

[3] Anthony M. Bertelli and Lilliard E. Richardson, Jr., The Behavioral Impact of Drinking and Driving Laws, Pol. Studies J. Vol 36, Iss. 4: 545-596 (November 19, 2008); Frank A. Sloan, et. Al, Alcohol-Impaired Driving and Perceived Risks of Legal Consequences, Alcohol Clin Exp Res 41(2):432-42 (February 2017); see Derek Pyn, Deterrence: increased enforcement versus harsher penalties, Economics Letters Vol. 117, Iss. 3:561-62 (December 2012); Qinghi Suo, Investigation on deterrence effect of legal punishment measures on driving after drinking in Chongqing, China, Traffic Inj Prev. 16(6):540-44 (2015).

[4] See id.

[5] See, e.g., Frank A. Sloan, et. Al, Alcohol-Impaired Driving and Perceived Risks of Legal Consequences, Alcohol Clin Exp Res 41(2):432-42 (February 2017).

[6] See id.; see Derek Pyn, Deterrence: increased enforcement versus harsher penalties, Economics Letters Vol. 117, Iss. 3:561-62 (December 2012).

[7] See Countermeasures that Work: Alcohol Impaired Driving: Enforcement: Publicized Sobriety Checkpoints, Nat'l Hwy Traffic Sfty Admin. (last reviewed May 21, 2025); Countermeasures that Work: Alcohol Impaired Driving: Enforcement: High Visibility Saturation Patrols, Nat'l Hwy Traffic Sfty Admin. (last reviewed May 21, 2025).

[8] R.W. Elder et Al., Effectiveness of mass media campaigns for reducing drinking and driving and alcohol-involved crashes, Am. J. of Preventive Medicine 27(1): 57-65 (2004).

[9] Id.





# DIRIGO SAFETY, LLC

PUBLIC SAFETY ADVOCATES



Dirigo Safety's newsletter titled "What's New at Dirigo Safety" can be found [here!](#)

## Green Lab: Cannabis Impairment Detection Training

October 16, 2025 0800-1700  
York Police Department

Price: FREE for Maine LEO's - Sponsored by OCP. \$600 for Non-Maine LEO's  
Lunch will be provided, limited seats available!

## Maine Search and Seizure Laws for Cops

October 17, 2025  
Skowhegan Police Department

Price: \$270.00

## Green Lab: Cannabis Impairment Detection Training

November 13, 2025 0800-1700  
Dirigo Safety, Auburn ME

Price: FREE for Maine LEO's - Sponsored by OCP. \$600 for Non-Maine LEO's  
Lunch will be provided, limited seats available!

## 2025 MCJA New Law / Case Law Mandatories & Yellow Flag Updates

November 3, 2025 0930-1130  
ZOOM

Price: FREE for Dirigo Safety Online training clients. \$25 for NON clients  
Certificates will be issued for training credit.



## Updates From

### Impaired Driving Enforcement Training Unit



DRE Refresher training was held in September, with instructors who attended the IACP's Impaired Driving & Traffic Safety conference presenting, as well as Maine's Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors and chemists from DHHS Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory. Discussion included lab capabilities, emerging courtroom trends, the increasing prevalence of kratom in Maine, and other topics. AAA Northern New England presented several of our newer DREs with embroidered polo shirts, and recognized several DREs who were present for their exceptional work. For more information about Maine DRE's program, contact Don Finnegan [Edwin.D.Finnegan@maine.gov](mailto:Edwin.D.Finnegan@maine.gov).

# Traffic Safety Marketing

Powered by NHTSA

FREE  
COMMUNICATION  
RESOURCES

## NHTSA Campaigns Happening Now & Upcoming

**HAPPENING NOW**



**Fatalities**  
1 pedestrian killed every 72 min  
20 pedestrian fatalities Every Day  
141 pedestrian fatalities A Week

**Injuries**  
1 pedestrian injured every 8 min  
187 pedestrian injuries Every Day  
1,312 pedestrian injuries A Week

**NHTSA**

**Pedestrian Safety Month**  
Pedestrian Safety

At some point in the day, everyone is a pedestrian. October is Pedestrian Safety Month, a good opportunity to increase pedestrian safety messaging across all platforms.

Oct 1, 2025 - Oct 31, 2025

**UPCOMING**



Drive like your future depends on it

**RULES for the ROAD**  
**NHTSA**

**Teen Driver Safety Week**  
Teen Driver Safety

A teen's inexperience behind the wheel makes them more susceptible to crashes. Teen Driver Safety Week is a good opportunity to increase teen driver safety messaging.

Oct 19, 2025 - Oct 25, 2025

**UPCOMING**



**BOO-ZE AND DRIVING?  
THAT'S A SCARY MISTAKE!**

**Halloween | Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving**  
Drunk Driving

We offer themed material for Halloween that encourages people to not get behind the wheel after drinking and to plan for a safe, sober ride home.

Oct 25, 2025 - Oct 31, 2025

Traffic Safety Marketing powered by NHTSA is a free resource for social media content that can be plug and play for current and upcoming NHTSA campaigns. These are just a few examples of current content that are ready for you. simply click on any image to redirect you to the TSM webpage.



## BUREAU OF HIGHWAY SAFETY IN THE FIELD

Members of the BHS team at the 2025 Maine Driver Education Summit in Auburn. L/R: Nicholas Brown, Karrie Cormier, Tracy Johnson, Scot Mattox, Patrick Hood.



A few weeks back, members of the BHS team including LEL Jim Willis (right) spent a day at Maine Maritime Academy. This annual visit provides opportunities for students to interact with both law enforcement and highway safety staff to discuss the dangers of impaired driving.

Highway Safety Coordinator Erica Davis (not in a reflective vest) is seen here with her team of child passenger safety instructors at the Child Passenger Safety Summit in Bangor last month. The team held a car seat check in the parking lot of Cross Insurance Center to kick off the 2-day event.





## BUREAU OF HIGHWAY SAFETY IN THE FIELD



**Top:** During the Child Passenger Safety Summit, Erica Davis recognized some Maine CPST's for excellence in child passenger safety. Pictured L/R is Dedication to Community Award Winner June Turcotte, Instructor of the Year Winner Jodi Polchies, and Technician of the Year Winner Brittney Dunphy.



**Left:** Members of our Highway Safety Office attended the Governors Highway Safety Association's annual meeting in Pittsburgh, PA in August. This meeting provides opportunities for education on a myriad of traffic safety topics, networking, technology solutions, and an annual awards ceremony focused on national successes in traffic safety that was hosted by Director Lauren Stewart. Jaime Pelotte was also voted to serve as GHSA Region 1 Representative for the New England States. L/R: Karrie Cormier, Jaime Pelotte, Lauren Stewart, Patrick Hood.

**Right:** HSC's Jeremy Morin and Karrie Cormier hosting a table at the Lewiston Public Works Safety Day in August. They brought the seatbelt convincer, distracted driving simulators, and impaired goggles to encourage safe driving habits while on the clock.





# Community Resource Page



## A Solution to Help Young Children Shine



Help Me Grow is a central access point designed to connect families to information and services about child development and community resources.

In partnership with 211 Maine caregivers and providers can contact Help Me Grow for additional support. Help Me Grow will listen, link families to services, and provide follow-up to both caregivers and referral sources.

### How It Works:

#### Eligibility

We are available at no cost to all Maine children, birth to eight, and their families/caregivers. Parents can also call for assistance during pregnancy.

#### Centralized Access Point

We assist caregivers and child health providers in connecting children to the grid of existing community and State resources that can help them thrive, through a "warm hand-off" from families to resources.

#### Resources

We help support a network of connected service providers, that can effectively serve families in Maine who have a variety of needs.

#### Developmental Screening

We promote working with families to recognize developmental milestones and utilize the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ) to assess development. If concerns are identified in the screening process, we work with families to connect to early intervention professionals for further assessment.

### Consider Referring A Family When:

- You are unsure what services a family might be eligible for, but know they need support.
- A family needs additional support navigating next steps in accessing resources (CDS, WIC, etc.).
- A screening needs to be completed, or family needs support completing an online ASQ®.



Scan QR Code to the right to learn more



#### Discrimination Notice

Department of Health and Human Services does not discriminate.

# CHOICES MATTER.



## Hillari Morgan

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