



**News Release No. 1**

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### **VIRGINIA ENDS 2008 WITH POTENTIAL FOR RECORD LOW TRAFFIC FATALITIES**

*Four Deaths over New Year's Holiday*

RICHMOND - For the first time in 16 years, traffic fatalities declined sharply in Virginia ending the year with a reported 808 deaths across the Commonwealth. The fatality count includes the deaths of 73 pedestrians. The 2008 preliminary number is a sharp contrast to the 1,026 individuals who lost their lives in traffic crashes in 2007.

“What a difference we’ve seen in the last 12 months on Virginia’s highways and we are certainly encouraged with the drastic drop in traffic fatalities,” says Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, Virginia State Police Superintendent. “While there are many factors that contributed to the decline, our desire is to save even more lives in 2009. As the New Year gets underway, we hope all Virginians resolve to make safe driving a priority when they get behind the wheel.”

During the New Year’s holiday weekend, a preliminary count indicates four people lost their lives in traffic crashes on Virginia’s roads. This is one of the lowest fatality counts for a New Year’s holiday weekend in the last decade. The statistical counting period began Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2008, at 6 p.m. and ended at midnight Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009. Alcohol was a factor in one of the fatal crashes. Of the three drivers and one passenger killed, none was wearing a safety restraint. During the 2007-2008 New Year’s holiday weekend, 14 people were killed in traffic crashes statewide.

Two of the fatal New Year’s weekend crashes occurred in Fairfax County. The remaining crashes took place in the counties of Pittsylvania and Smyth.

Over the 2008 Christmas holiday weekend, six people lost their lives during the statistical counting period which began Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2008 and ended Sunday, Dec. 28, 2008. Alcohol was a factor in one crash and safety belts were not used in three crashes. Of those killed during the Christmas holiday weekend, one involved a pedestrian struck in Albemarle County. The last time Virginia experienced a number this low during the Christmas holiday was in 1998 when six people were killed in traffic collisions.

The remaining Christmas holiday fatalities occurred in the counties of Fairfax, Isle of Wight and Smyth and the cities of Harrisonburg and Virginia Beach.

Christmas Holiday	# of days	Virginia Fatalities	New Year's Holiday	# of days	Virginia Fatalities
2008	5	6	2008	5	4
2007	5	7	2007	5	14
2006	5	8	2006	5	13
2005	4	12	2005	3	13
2004	3	7	2004	2	7
2003	5	16	2003	4	11

#### STATEWIDE MEDIA CONTACTS:

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