



NEWS RELEASE
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Operation Thunder Rolling Into Chatham County
High Visibility Taskforce to Tackle Crash Counts and Impaired Driving

(SAVANNAH) The Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) is announcing life-saving news for the Savannah area: Operation Thunder is launching a 3-month, high-visibility campaign to help cops crack down on dangerous drivers throughout Chatham County. The Thunder taskforce is a specialized traffic enforcement unit designed to help Georgia cities and counties combat abnormally high occurrences of traffic crashes, injuries and fatalities on local, high-traffic corridors.

Savannah-Chatham County has indeed seen a sharp increase in fatalities since 2012. That year, the area experienced 16 fatal crashes, including four pedestrian fatalities. But in 2013, they experienced 38 fatal crashes with another 3 pedestrian fatalities. To date in 2014, Savannah-Chatham has already seen 11 fatal crashes with four pedestrian fatalities.

GOHS will hit the ground running with the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department and personnel from several other agencies from around the state by kicking off Operation Thunder with a news conference at New Hampstead High School at 10:45 am on Friday, May 30. In addition to reducing overall incidents of impaired, speeding and unbelted drivers, the Thunder taskforce will also be focusing on the issue of pedestrian deaths in Savannah-Chatham.

"We are always focusing on reducing overall traffic fatalities, which we will certainly do during this Thunder campaign, but this time, we will also be specifically focusing on preventing pedestrian fatalities and increasing pedestrian safety awareness," said GOHS Law Enforcement Services Director Powell Harrelson. "We are not even halfway through the year and Savannah-Chatham has already experienced as many of these fatalities as it did in all of 2012."

This Operation Thunder campaign is being launched in full cooperation with area law enforcement, including the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department. The mission is to detect Georgia's high-crash corridors and reduce mounting highway deaths and serious injuries by introducing a high visibility law enforcement presence to help stabilize the extreme and illegal driving behaviors of careless motorists who cause those crashes.

"We are looking forward to aiding local law enforcement in a combined effort to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities in such a well-traveled area of Georgia," said GOHS Director Harris Blackwood. "As we near the start of summer, more people will be heading to Chatham County and Georgia's coast for vacation and we want them to be able to return home safely."

Strategies during Operation Thunder will include assigning concentrated patrols to state routes, rural roads and interstate highways on alternating schedules throughout the campaign. Thunder officers will conduct safety belt and sobriety roadchecks as well as speed patrols while collecting enforcement data to document their life-saving progress.

For more information on the Thunder Taskforce, visit www.gahighwaysafety.org.

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