



## NEWS RELEASE

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### FDOT and FHP Announce “Operation Southern Shield”

~ Southeastern law enforcement agencies participate in joint enforcement July 19-24 ~

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Today, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in collaboration with the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV) and its division of the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP), announced the kick-off of “Operation Southern Shield,” a joint effort with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the southeastern states of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee. State and local law enforcement agencies in all five states will be conducting a week-long speed enforcement campaign, and FHP will be specifically focused on detecting and citing drivers for exceeding the posted speed limits across Florida’s interstate corridors.

“Nationwide, there is a dangerous trend in fatalities and crashes caused by excessive speed, and, though it may seem harmless, the choice to speed is a deadly one,” said FDOT Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, P.E. “FDOT remains committed to the goal of zero fatalities on Florida’s roadways and we are proud to join ‘Operation Southern Shield’ as well as support our law enforcement partners in this life-saving effort.”

According to NHTSA, in 2019, speeding killed more than 9,000 people nationwide, with nearly 47% of speeding drivers in these fatal crashes failing to wear a seat belt. One of the primary reasons that speed-related crashes have such detrimental effects is that the increased velocity and force of impact works against the usefulness of safety equipment, such as seat belts and air bags. Speeding and driving aggressively translate to less vehicle control, increased stopping distances, and greater risk to others on or near the roadway.

Preliminary 2020 data from FLHSMV shows traffic fatalities increased by 4.67% from 2019 to 2020, despite a 15.31% decrease in total crashes statewide. In 2020, speeding was a contributing factor in approximately 12% of traffic crash fatalities statewide, resulting in nearly 400 fatalities.

“Speeding endangers not only the life of the speeder, but all road users around them, including law enforcement officers and other public safety workers,” **said Colonel Gene S. Spaulding, Director of the Florida Highway Patrol.** “The Florida Highway Patrol is pleased to partner with our neighboring states and local law enforcement agencies in our continued effort to make Florida’s roadways safer for all.”

As you travel, here are some tips to stay safe on Florida’s roadways this summer:

- Anticipate increased traffic during peak travel periods. Plan ahead and give yourself ample drive time.
- Buckle up and make sure all passengers are buckled up the entire trip.
- Slow down in construction zones. Keep in mind that construction increases during the summer

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season.

- No matter how eager you are to get to your destination, speeding and driving aggressively is dangerous. Stay patient and give other road users plenty of space.
- If you observe aggressive driving, do not engage with the other driver. Dial \*FHP (\*347) or 911 for local law enforcement.

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*The Florida Department of Transportation's mission is to provide a safe transportation system that ensures the mobility of people and goods, enhances economic prosperity, and preserves the quality of the state's environment and communities. The department is committed to building a transportation system that not only fits the current needs of Florida's residents and visitors, but also enhances mobility throughout the state to accommodate its consistent and rapid growth. The unique nature of the Sunshine State and its year-round warm climate provides numerous opportunities to achieve the department's mission through multiple transportation modes including highways/streets, air, rail, sea, spaceports, transit, and the ever-expanding deployment of bicycle & pedestrian facilities.*