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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2005 Drunk Driving Audit shows fatalities, injuries and arrests continue to decrease

Michigan's drunk driving arrests, convictions and crashes, as well as fatalities and injuries involving alcohol and/or drugs, have decreased for the fourth consecutive year, according to the 2005 Drunk Driving Audit.

The audit, issued by the Michigan State Police, Criminal Justice Information Center, includes arrest activity by law enforcement agency for each county in the state as well as crash, injury and fatality information by county.

Alcohol- and/or drug-related fatalities fell 2.4 percent, from 418 in 2004 to 408 in 2005. Injuries resulting from alcohol- and/or drug-related crashes decreased by about 8 percent, from 8,667 in 2004 to 7,982 in 2005.

Drunk and impaired driving arrests totaled 54,056, a decrease from the 55,070 individuals arrested in 2004. Of the arrests in 2005, 52,235 were for operating while intoxicated (OWI). Convictions for 2005, which may be from prior-year arrests, include 22,631 for OWI and 29,188 for impaired driving.

"Law enforcement officers across Michigan are vigilant when it comes to enforcing drunk driving laws because drunk and drugged driving remain significant traffic safety issues," said Michigan State Police Director, Colonel Peter C. Munoz. "Despite the state's continuing decline in crashes and fatalities, approximately 35 percent of all fatal crashes that occurred last year involved alcohol and/or drug use."

Educating the public of Michigan's drunk driving laws and increasing awareness of the serious consequences for violating them is critical, said Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land.

"The majority of Michigan motorists drive responsibly," Land said. "They understand the needless dangers posed by drinking and driving. But we must continue reinforcing this public-safety message in order to keep this positive trend on track. Education and awareness are essential. We will continue working with law enforcement and other safety advocates for the good of Michigan families."

Michigan's repeat offender law took effect in October 1999. This law created harsher penalties for repeat offenders in an effort to limit access to vehicles through license plate confiscation, mandatory vehicle immobilization and vehicle forfeiture. A change to set the legal definition of drunk driving at .08 blood alcohol content (BAC) was effective in September 2003.

The 2005 Drunk Driving Audit is available online. To view the entire report, visit www.michigan.gov/msp, then click on Publications, Forms & Statistics. Next, click Statistics, then Traffic Crash Statistics, then click Michigan Drunk Driving Audit.