



September 29, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Lori Conarton, IIM (517) 371-2880
Nancy Cain, AAA (313) 336-1514

Vehicle-Deer Crash Coalition Unveils New Website

(Lansing, MI) — With the two most dangerous months — October and November — for vehicle-deer crashes fast approaching, the Michigan Deer Crash Coalition (MDCC) today launched its new website, www.michigandeercrash.org. The website provides Michigan motorists with tips for preventing vehicle-deer crashes, which account for at least \$130 million in damages annually.

“There are approximately 167 vehicle-deer crashes each day in Michigan and motorists can visit the website to learn how to lessen their chances of becoming one of those statistics,” said Lori Conarton, MDCC chair.

To increase awareness about vehicle-deer crashes, October has been proclaimed as “Michigan Car-Deer Crash Safety Awareness Month” by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm.

The MDCC encourages motorists to “think deer” whenever they are behind the wheel, and drive defensively, as if a deer can appear at any moment, because it can! And motorists are reminded to always fasten their seat belts. Seat belts often make the difference in surviving a serious crash.

“Most motorist deaths and injuries occur when drivers swerve to avoid hitting the deer and strike a fixed object, such as a tree or another vehicle,” said Coalition Chair Lori Conarton of the Insurance Institute of Michigan. “No one wants to see a deer injured or killed, but striking the animal is often the safest way to prevent injuries.”

According to the Michigan State Police Criminal Justice Information Center, there were 61,010 deer-vehicle crashes in 2008, down from the 61,907 crashes reported in 2007. However, officials note that many crashes also go unreported, so actual crash numbers are much higher.

More than 19 percent of all crashes in Michigan involve deer. Last year, 12 motorists were killed and 1,648 were injured as the result of a vehicle-deer crashes, compared to 11 fatalities and 1,614 injuries the previous year.

Nearly half of all car-deer crashes occur in the October-to-December mating season when deer are very active, and crashes spike again in spring when the season’s first grass appears along highway rights-of-way.

If a crash with a deer is unavoidable, the MDCC recommends drivers:

- DON’T SWERVE!
- Brake firmly.

- Hold onto the steering wheel with both hands.
- Come to a controlled stop.
- Steer your vehicle well off the roadway.

The MDCC says motorists can help avoid dangerous encounters with deer by

heeding the following tips:

- Slow down, especially if you see deer along the roadway.
- Watch for deer, especially at dawn and dusk when they are most active during the fall.
- If you see one deer, assume more deer may be nearby.
- Deer that appear calm can dart into the road without warning.
- Be alert all year long, especially on two-lane roads.

MDCC members are: AAA Michigan, Insurance Institute of Michigan, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of State, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Sheriffs' Association, Office of Highway Safety Planning, SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments), State Farm Insurance and Traffic Improvement Association.

###