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News Release

For Immediate Release

July Crash Report Card

The Springfield Public Works Department's July 2011 Crash Report Card shows there have been five fatal crashes (resulting in five total fatalities) from January 1 through July 31 of this year, compared to eight fatal crashes (resulting in 10 total fatalities) in the same period in 2010. The number of injury crashes is down by 5 percent and total number of crashes thus far in 2011 is also 3 percent lower compared to the same period last year.

September Safety Message

Motorcycle, scooter and bicycle safety is the topic of this month's safety message. Outside of pedestrians, these are the most vulnerable road users on our streets, and are frequently not seen by other motorists. Studies show that drivers have a trained eye to watch for other cars and trucks, but often do not register bikes.

The City of Springfield is striving to be a greener and healthier community, and accommodating and promoting alternative transportation is an important part of this goal. Motorcycle, scooter, and bicycle ridership has rapidly increased in our community with the expansion of "The Link," shared bicycle facilities, and increased gas prices. It is essential for passenger vehicle and truck drivers to adjust to the multi-modal trend, so that all road users can safely share the road.

Drivers must recognize that motorcycles and bikes have the same rights to be on the street as they do. However, cyclists also must recognize that they have the same responsibilities as motorists. These responsibilities include signaling, stopping at red signals and stop signs, and not cutting off others on the road. Safe and smooth traffic for all users can only be achieved through mutual courtesy.

Tips for passenger vehicle and commercial vehicle drivers:

- Train yourself to specifically look for cyclists. Also, be aware that their speed is hard to judge due to their smaller profile.
- Always check your blind spots, and form a habit to check over your right shoulder for bikes and pedestrians when making a right turn.
- Give cyclists space in all directions and use your signals. Don't pass if you can't safely do so, or can't give them enough space.
- Consider that the weather, road surface or debris in the road can cause cyclists to stop, swerve or change lanes unexpectedly.

Tips for bicycle, scooter & motorcycle drivers:
• Drive as if you are invisible. Never assume that a motorist has seen you just because he or she has looked your direction. Keep your eyes moving to stay aware of changing conditions and make yourself visible by wearing brightly colored clothing, including reflective gear and lights.

• Bicyclists: Check out Springfield's Bike Route map (PDF). It is safer and often more enjoyable to use a designated bike route, even if it is a couple of blocks out of one's way. Streets with narrow lanes and high traffic volumes on which passing is difficult should be avoided when there is a reasonable alternative route.

• Cyclists have the right to ride on the sidewalk, except in business districts such as Downtown and on Commercial Street. However, if riding on the sidewalk, you must yield to pedestrians and act as a pedestrian at all crossings.

• Helmets put a few inches between your head and the pavement. Motorcyclists are required by state law to wear a Department of Transportation approved helmet. Bicyclists should also wear a properly fitted helmet when traveling the road or trails.

• Vehicles turning left in front of oncoming motorcycles are the No. 1 killer of motorcyclists nationally. Slow down and assume you are not visible to the other driver.

• It is always a good idea to keep your front brakes covered with your hand: It will save you about one second of reaction time, which when traveling at a speed of 60 mph makes a difference of 88 feet of braking distance for a motorcyclist.

• Do not dart into the intersection after the light changes to green. Look right and left to make sure no one is running the red light.

• It is also recommended that both new and experienced motorcycle drivers attend a motorcycle safety class to learn important riding skills to increase the chances of avoiding unwanted incidents. Go to http://www.otc.edu/workforce/motorcycle-safety.php. There are also classes for bicyclists who want to learn skills to be safer in traffic, typically offered by local bike shops.

• Do not drink and drive. On average, 50 percent or more of Springfield's fatality crashes involve alcohol.