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State among worst for DUI fatalities

South Carolina makes national top 15 list again

Posted Tuesday, November 29, 2005 - 6:00 am

By Claire Anderson
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Fred Cashion says that these days he spends a lot of time checking his mirrors when he's driving.

Cashion, 76, of Greenville says that's because he's always concerned about the other driver on the road.

"I just watch the other fellow," Cashion said. "Some of us make tragic decisions." And, according to data released Monday, drivers' decisions to drink and drive had particularly deadly consequences on South Carolina's roadways last year.

South Carolina ranks 10th among the "Fatal Fifteen," which are the 15 states, as well as Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, where 41 percent or more of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related, according to The Coalition to END Needless Death on Our Roadways and The National Safety Council 2004 statistics.

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The National Safety Council focuses on promoting health and the Coalition to End Needless Death on Our Roadways (END) is a group of doctors and other medical professionals that looks for ways to combat dangerous driving.

South Carolina is one of 13 states that have made the list two years in a row, according to a joint press release from the groups.

"While the effects of stricter impaired driving laws and a general change in public attitude has lowered the number of impaired driving deaths over the years, the reduction in death rate has reached a plateau," said Dr. Thomas Esposito, co-chairperson of END and director of injury analysis and prevention at Loyola University Medical Center.

Last year, 17,000 motorists were killed in alcohol-related crashes on the nation's roadways, the data said, and nearly 6,000 of those deaths were in the "Fatal Fifteen."

In 2004, 1046 people were killed on South Carolina roads, and 459 of those death were alcohol-related, said Sid Gaulden, spokesman for the state Department of Public Safety.

So far this year, there have been 992 deaths, and approximately 362 of those were

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alcohol-related, Gaulden said.

Mike Sullivan, 29, of Spartanburg said he was surprised that South Carolina ranked as high as it did.

"I feel safe because of my driving abilities, but not because of others," he said.

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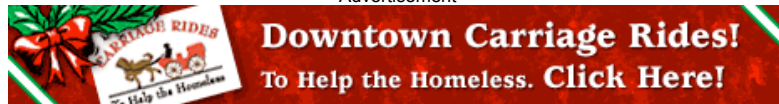
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