



NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: CAPTAIN THOMAS PIKUL
FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL
(850) 617-2301

STAY AT THE SCENE - IT COULD SAVE A LIFE

~ February 2019 is Hit and Run Awareness Month ~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) recognizes Hit and Run Awareness Month this February by reminding all motorists to *Stay at the Scene* when involved in a crash. The initiative seeks to reduce the number of hit and run crashes in Florida in partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Sheriffs Association, Florida Police Chiefs Association, Crimestoppers and AAA – The Auto Club Group.

“If you are involved in a crash, *Stay at the Scene*. Not only is it the law, but doing so could save a life,” said DHSMV Executive Director, Terry L. Rhodes. “Leaving the scene of the crash will ensure you receive more serious penalties, no matter the severity of the crash. Hit and run crashes have an enormous impact to Florida’s communities and our department is dedicated to solving these cases. I implore members of the public to report any information on hit and run crashes anonymously to Crime Stoppers.”

In 2018 preliminarily, there were more than 90,000 hit and run crashes in Florida. Under Florida law, a driver must stop immediately at the scene of a crash on public or private property that results in injury or death. Leaving the scene of a crash is a felony and a driver, when convicted, will have their license revoked for at least three years and can be sentenced to a mandatory minimum of four years in prison.

“It is your responsibility under the law, and to the other parties involved, to stay at the scene of a crash,” said Florida Highway Patrol Director, Colonel Gene S. Spaulding. “Although being involved in a crash is a traumatic experience, you should remain calm, render first aid if necessary, and remove your vehicle from the roadway as soon as possible to prevent secondary crashes.”

Although bicyclists and pedestrians are involved in a small percentage of hit and run crashes overall, pedestrians made up 59 percent and bicyclists made up 15 percent of all hit and run fatalities. Motorists are urged to drive safely and look twice for these vulnerable road users. If you are in a crash, always stay at the scene and call for aid.

“Safety is our number one priority, and we want everyone driving on our roadways to arrive safely at their destinations,” said Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Kevin Thibault. “However, if you do find yourself in a crash it is vital to stay at the scene. Not only is leaving against the law, remaining and waiting for first responders, and assisting other motorists, could help save a life.”

“Leaving the scene of a traffic crash can turn a simple accident into a crime with consequences. On behalf of our Florida Sheriffs, I fully support the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles ‘Stay at the Scene’ education initiative,” said Florida Sheriffs Association President Sheriff Mark Hunter.

“When investigating a crash, law enforcement officers want to have the best and most accurate information possible,” says Chief David Perry, FPCA President. “However, Hit & Run crashes continue to remain high in Florida, leaving many questions unanswered and often leading to devastating consequences for those involved in the crash. If you are involved in a crash, the FPCA reminds you to ALWAYS stop, report, and wait for first responders to arrive—it’s the law! Not only will these actions allow you to speak personally with law enforcement about what happened, but you may just save lives by staying at the scene.”

“The Florida Association of Crime Stoppers programs encourage anyone with information on Hit and Run traffic crashes to provide the information,” said the President of the Florida Association of Crime Stoppers, Barb Bergin. “You can do it anonymously by contacting your local Crime Stoppers program. Say It Here, please report all information.”

“Traffic crashes are dangerous enough without involved parties leaving the scene,” said Matt Nasworthy, Florida Public Affairs Director for AAA – The Auto Club Group. “Never put others’ lives or your freedom at risk with such a bad decision.”

The most important thing a driver can do when they are involved in a crash is to *Stay at the Scene* and call for help. The public is encouraged to report hit and run crashes by dialing *FHP (*347). For more information on hit and runs and staying at the scene, visit: <https://www.flhsmv.gov/safety-center/driving-safety/hitrun/>.

Please see the department’s [website](#) for a full list of active Hit and Run cases. If the public has any information on these open cases, please contact [Crimestoppers](#) immediately.

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[The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles](#) provides highway safety and security through excellence in service, education and enforcement. The Department is leading the way to a safer Florida through the efficient and professional execution of its core mission: the issuance of driver licenses, vehicle tags and titles and operation of the Florida Highway Patrol. To learn more about DHSMV and the services offered, visit www.flhsmv.gov, follow us on Twitter [@FLHSMV](#) or find us on [Facebook](#).