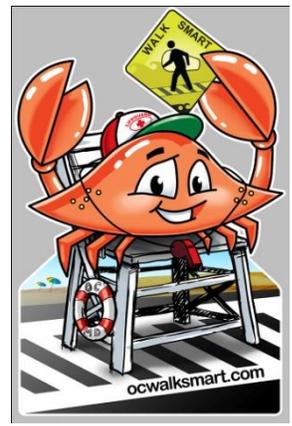




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For Immediate Release

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STATE PARTNERS WITH OCEAN CITY OFFICIALS TO LAUNCH WALK SMART SAFETY CAMPAIGN

Campaign Features Crab the Lifeguard Watching Over Coastal Highway

(May 21, 2013) - If your summer travel plans include “surfing” Coastal Highway – become acquainted with Crab the Lifeguard, who will be watching over Coastal Highway (MD 528) this spring and summer to keep pedestrians safe in Ocean City. After relatively successful summers, last year two pedestrians were killed in Ocean City and another 13 were injured, a marked increase compared to 2011 when there were no pedestrian fatalities and eight people injured. A partnership between the Town of Ocean City, Ocean City Police Department, Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and other local businesses and agencies created the Walk Smart! campaign to turn the tide on the recent wave of pedestrian crashes - complementing engineering and enforcement efforts to keep Ocean City residents and visitors safe this summer.

“For Maryland families, a vacation to Ocean City is a treasured summer ritual,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “As the crowds swell during the summer months, we must all remain vigilant to ensure drivers and pedestrians along OC roadways are safe. This strategic campaign is a partnership to safeguard the lives of vacationers, visitors and residents of Maryland’s family-friendly beach resort.”

Ocean City becomes one of Maryland’s largest cities during the summer months with a population that changes each and every weekend. Through the three E’s of safety - engineering, education and enforcement - SHA and Ocean City partners are working together to keep city streets safe.

Over the course of the last several months, traffic engineers evaluated traffic patterns and enhanced safety at key intersections with work including retiming signals, enhancing turning movements at intersections, placing “no pedestrian crossing” curb stencils and installing signs in high pedestrian volume areas along Coastal Highway to direct people to crosswalks. Aggressive ongoing police enforcement will be complemented with overtime-funded enforcement – addressing both drivers and pedestrians who are not following the rules of the road.

“Our visitors love Ocean City because we are a safe and fun, family resort, and we want to keep it that way,” said Ocean City Mayor Richard Meehan. “We are asking visitors to Walk Smart in Ocean City, by using marked crosswalks and crossing with the signal.”

The Walk Smart! campaign features the iconic Maryland crab dressed as a lifeguard who teaches the importance of roadway basics in a beach-friendly, family-fun tone. His Save Yourself! message teaches personal responsibility and directs people to use crosswalks, follow signals and exercise general street smarts.

(More)

Featured on Ocean City transit, plane banners, boat billboard messages, roadside billboards, television and radio public service announcements, the Walk Smart! campaign will provide constant, consistent messaging all summer long. In addition to outdoor advertising, the campaign includes communicating safety messages to high school seniors prior to Senior Week as well as Ocean City's late night crowd. Additionally, Walk Smart! teams will distribute street smart tips cards along Coastal Highway.

Save Yourself! with these tips:

- Cross at and within marked crosswalks.
 - Look, pay attention, then cross.
 - Follow all traffic signals signs and marking.
 - Use the sidewalk – do not cross in the street.
 - Wear light-colored or reflective clothing at night so drivers can SEE you.
- When driving:
 - Stop for all pedestrians in crosswalks – this is Maryland law.
 - Slow down - watch for pedestrians and yield to pedestrians when turning.
 - Keep your eyes on the road. It's illegal to text and use hand held devices while driving.
 - Stay alert and avoid all distractions.
 - Share the road with bicycles and give three feet of space when passing.

The campaign had its debut at the AAA summer travel press conference along the Kent Island shoreline at the foot of the Bay Bridge, which thousands of drivers will cross in their travel to shore destinations. While SHA is focused on helping people arrive at the beach safely through initiatives such as 511, emergency traffic patrols and live traffic monitoring, the campaign goal is to keep visitors safe while in Ocean City -- so they arrive safely home again. For tips for parents of children, senior week bound teens and others, visit www.ocwalksmart.com.

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