



**New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association (NJGCA)**

*(Formerly New Jersey Gasoline Retailers Association)*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Did eliminating Safety Inspections influence rising traffic fatalities?**

*New statistics illustrate that fatal traffic related accidents increased in 2011;*

*Spike in traffic-related deaths snaps a 5 year decline in fatal accidents;*

*Motor Vehicle Safety Inspections were abolished in August 2010.*

Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association (NJGCA), released the following statement regarding a recent State Police report showing an increase in the number of traffic related deaths:

“Earlier this week, new State Police statistics were made available that showed an uptick in the number of traffic related deaths in 2011. Unfortunately for state motorists, this marks the end of a five-year trend in which fatalities decreased year-after-year”, stated Risalvato.

“As an individual, this kind of news is always upsetting to learn. Yet as an organization, it is especially tough to read and get our heads around. That’s because our members are small business owners who serve New Jersey’s motorists. Their customers aren’t mere strangers, but local patrons, neighbors, and friends. Certainly this gives us pause on what can be done to reverse this spike in fatal accidents”, Sal said.

“Looking back on 2011, I can’t help but question if there is any correlation between this new report and the elimination of Safety Inspections in August of 2010? While some might dismiss such a consideration as nothing more than a tenuous connection, cynics may find it interesting to know that our members have a rather special insight in this arena”, Risalvato mused.

“The advantage our members possess stems directly from their time repairing the vehicles we see on our roads daily. I am contacted regularly by members commenting on the condition of the cars that show up at their shops. Most of them have simple mechanical repairs that are easily fixed. Many others, however, show up at garages all over the state with serious safety issues that are disregarded by vehicle owners”, said Sal.

“Unlike the previous five years that saw a steady decline in accident-related deaths, since August 2010 motorists are no longer compelled to get glaring safety issues repaired in order to pass a vehicle inspection. Rather, drivers need only comply with emission standards, permitting safety issues to be put off or postponed indefinitely. While these motorists are undoubtedly limited by time and monetary constraints, they still put themselves and other drivers at risk when they operate an unsafe vehicle”, Risalvato stated.

“Our members are giving us firsthand, anecdotal evidence of their encounters with these customers. Though they are courteous professionals and point out these safety deficiencies, many drivers are simply ignoring common sense repairs and getting back on the road. Shop owners are witnessing crucial problems -- such as bald and separating tires, worn out brake pads and rotors, steering and suspension issues, and broken turn signal and headlights – go unrepaired over long periods of time. While the customer may be thinking they are merely stretching the life of a tire, brake, or other component, mechanics know they are exercising poor judgment and taking an enormous risk”, Sal stated.

“For the New Jersey’s small business owners who serve state motorists, this is an incredibly frustrating situation to be in. On one hand, you know that your customer is putting themselves at risk, but on the other hand, you are powerless to compel them to get needed repairs done. What’s worse, when performing an inspection, a vehicle cannot be failed for failure to show proof of insurance or a driver’s license. That means not only are some driving unsafe cars, but shop owners can’t stop an unlicensed or uninsured motorists from getting back on the road with that car! It’s utterly maddening!” exclaimed Risalvato.

“This report should give everyone a moment’s pause to evaluate the raw data. The State Police says it will take weeks to determine why these numbers are increasing after a five-year decline. I sincerely hope that all possibilities are explored, including the firsthand knowledge and experience my members encounter everyday. Drivers – and those fellow motorists driving alongside of them – should insist on nothing less”, Risalvato concluded.

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