

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Secretary Catherine Torres, MD

For Immediate Release:
March 3, 2011

Media Contact: John McPhee
Office: 505-827-2582

Dept. of Health Study Shows More Children Protected by Wearing Helmets
Helmet Use Doubles in Three Years

(Santa Fe) – Helmet use among New Mexico children who ride bicycles, skateboards, scooters and skates has doubled since the New Mexico Child Helmet Safety Act became law in 2007, according to a new study from the New Mexico Department of Health.

According to the study, only 13.1 percent of youth were wearing helmets prior to the implementation of the law. Helmet use has increased to 30.6 percent over the past three years. The study was conducted in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Cruces, Las Vegas and Roswell.

“This is excellent news for New Mexico, as it means more of our children are protected against traumatic brain injuries and other potentially life threatening injuries by wearing a helmet,” said Health Secretary Catherine Torres, MD. “While I am excited about the increase in helmet usage statewide, I want to encourage all parents to make sure their children are wearing a helmet when riding their bike, skateboard, scooter or skates.”

Traumatic brain injuries are a significant cost burden to families and the overall medical system. On average, every \$10 helmet in use saves an estimated \$570 over a four year period by reducing the cost of emergency room visits, rehabilitation, disability services and loss of income to the family, according to the Children’s Safety Network.

“There is a definite cost benefit to our state by reducing the number of head injuries, but our bottom line is the lives of children that can be saved by wearing helmets,” Dr. Torres said. “In addition, the severity of injuries that would otherwise affect kids adults throughout their lives can be diminished. There are several programs around the state where parents can get a free helmet, so there is no reason why any child in New Mexico should go unprotected.”

The Department of Health continues to support the distribution of helmets at safety events through the SAFE KIDS network. There are 12 regional SAFE KIDS coalitions and community chapters statewide, many of them sponsored by trauma centers. The cities of Albuquerque, Carlsbad, Farmington, Las Cruces, Lovington, Santa Fe, Silver City and Roswell have also been instrumental in providing funding to purchase and distribute free helmets in conjunction with safety programs conducted at schools and in city parks.

The Department of Health recommends the following guidelines for safe helmet usage:



- The label inside the helmet should say it meets the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) safety standard or another safety standard.
- The helmet should be worn level on the head, not tilted back or pulled too low on the forehead.
- Parents need to teach their children to fasten and tighten the chin strap and adjust the slider on both straps to form a “V” shape under and slightly in front of the ears.
- The slider should be under the earlobe and the helmet should be snug and not move side-to-side or back-to-front.

For more information about the helmet safety programs statewide, call the New Mexico SAFE KIDS Coalition at 505-827-2582 or go online at www.safekids.org

#