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Department of Health Reports Injury Death Rates Suicide and Homicide Rates Decreased in 2005

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health reported today that New Mexico’s suicide and homicide rates decreased from 2004 to 2005, causing a drop in the state’s injury death rate.

New Mexico’s injury death rate dropped to 92.5 deaths per 100,000 persons in 2005 from a rate of 93.9 in 2004. Louisiana had the highest injury death rate in 2005 partly due to deaths from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; in 2004 that state had ranked 6th.

“We know each death is a tragedy for families, and we will continue to do what we can to reduce preventable deaths,” said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil.

New Mexico’s suicide rate in 2005 was the lowest level in the last seven years with 18 deaths per 100,000 people. In 2004, that rate was 18.8 deaths per 100,000 people. The decreased rate caused New Mexico’s national rank for suicide to drop from 3rd highest in 2004 to 4th in 2005.

Gov. Bill Richardson has made suicide prevention one of his important priorities. He has allocated specific state funding for youth suicide prevention and for the Department to develop school based health centers throughout New Mexico. Through these centers, health providers screen students for potential behavioral health issues and provide appropriate intervention and referrals as needed.

“We realize suicide rates fluctuate over the years, but the good news is we have developed a system through our school based health centers to intervene and offer assistance when students may be at risk for committing suicide,” Dr. Vigil said.

To learn more about warning signs of suicide and preventing suicide, people can look up the New Mexico Suicide Prevention Coalition, www.nmsuicide.org.

The 2005 homicide rate of 8.2 per 100,000 individuals also reached a new seven year low as the New Mexico’s rank dropped to 7th, from 4th in 2004.

New Mexico’s unintentional injury death rate increased slightly in 2005, mainly due to fall deaths and poisonings. Despite the increase, New Mexico’s ranking improved. The state had the 1st highest rate in 2002, 2003 and 2004 to 3rd in 2005 after Louisiana and Mississippi.

Nationally, injuries continue to be the leading cause of death in children and younger adults, and a serious health risk for our senior adult populations.