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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DRIVERS BEWARE!
DEER SEASON CREATING HAZARDOUS ROAD CONDITIONS**

NYIA Offers Tips to Avoid Animal-Related Crashes

NEW YORK, October 6, 2005 – Cars and deer can be a lethal combination. Each year the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports that there are more than 1.5 million crashes in the United States involving deer, costing an estimated \$1.1 billion in vehicle damage.

The average cost per insurance claim was \$2,000, with costs varying depending on the type of vehicle and severity of damage, according to the New York Insurance Association (NYIA).

During deer season, which runs from October through December, there can be dramatic movements in the deer population with a significant number of deer darting onto highways and into suburban neighborhoods. Over this time period, more deer-vehicle collisions occur than any other time of year, so drivers need to be especially cautious, warns the NYIA.

“As our wildlife habitat continues to shrink, accidents with deer and other animals are likely to increase unless we are more vigilant in our driving,” said NYIA president Bernard Bourdeau.

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NYIA suggests the following defensive driving tips to avoid hitting a deer:

- Be attentive from sunset to midnight and hours shortly before and after sunrise. These are the highest risk periods for deer-vehicle collisions to occur.
- Drive with caution when moving through deer-crossing zones, in areas known to have a large deer population and in areas where roads divide agricultural fields from forestland. Deer seldom run alone. If you see one deer, others may be nearby.
- When driving at night, use high beam headlights when there is no oncoming traffic. The high-beams will better illuminate the eyes of deer on or near the roadway.
- Brake firmly when you notice a deer in or near your path, but stay in your lane. Many serious crashes occur when drivers swerve to avoid a deer and hit another vehicle or lose control of their cars.
- Do not rely on devices such as deer whistles, deer fences and reflectors to deter deer. These devices have not been proven to reduce deer-vehicle collisions.
- Always wear your seat belt. Deer-vehicle collisions can result in serious injuries. People tend to underestimate how much damage collisions with animals can cause.
- If your vehicle strikes a deer, it's best not to touch the animal. The frightened and wounded animal could hurt you or itself, warns NYIA. If the deer is blocking the roadway and poses a danger to other motorists, you should call the police.

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Contact your insurance agent or company representative to report any damage to your car. Collision with a deer or animals is covered under the comprehensive portion of your automobile policy.

The New York Insurance Association is a trade association of property/casualty insurance companies which provide coverage for autos, homes and businesses throughout New York State.