



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 10, 2006

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PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES 2005 *CRASH FACTS*

Traffic Deaths Decrease Second Year in a Row; 18 Counties with One or No Deaths

ST. PAUL — The annual summary of traffic crashes and deaths, *Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts 2005*, reports 559 fatalities — a 1.4 percent decrease in traffic deaths from 2004, and more than a 14 percent decrease since the 655 deaths in 2003. *Crash Facts* cites 36,870 DWI arrests last year, the highest number recorded since 1990. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) compiles the report.

Crash Facts reports 559 fatalities, 37,686 injuries, and 87,813 total crashes at an estimated economic impact of more than \$1.6 billion. The 2005 numbers reflect the deaths of motorists (440), motorcyclists (59), pedestrians (44), bicyclists (7), ATV riders (7), and snowmobilers (2). Of the 440 vehicle occupants killed, 225 (51 percent) were not wearing seat belts. Alcohol-related crashes accounted for 197 deaths compared to 177 in 2004.

Significantly, OTS reports less than one fatality (0.99) per 100 million vehicle miles traveled — compared to the U.S. national average of 1.46. In Minnesota in 2005, there were 3.9 million licensed drivers, more than 4.6 million registered motor vehicles and over 56 billion miles traveled. Over the last three decades, the number of Minnesota crash fatalities has decreased even as the number of drivers and miles traveled has dramatically increased.

Nearly 40 percent of the deaths (220) were people under age 30. One in four fatal crashes occurred between 3 and 7 p.m., and 70 percent of fatal crashes occurred in rural areas (populations of less than 5,000).

To view *Crash Facts* online, go to www.dps.state.mn.us/ots and click on “Crash Data and Reports.”

Eight Minnesota counties recorded no traffic fatalities in 2005: Big Stone, Grant, Mahnommen, Norman, Sibley, Swift, Traverse and Wilkin. There were 10 counties with one only traffic fatality each — Brown, Cook, Cottonwood, Koochiching, Lac Qui Parle, Marshall, Mower, Nicollet, Red Lake and Rock.

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There were 59 motorcyclist deaths in 2005, a significant increase from the previous year. While motorcycle operators represent little more than 2 percent of road users, they accounted for 10.5 percent of total traffic fatalities last year.

Commercial vehicles were involved in 66 fatal crashes resulting in 78 deaths — 10 of which were truck occupants. There were seven fatal crashes involving school buses; the fatalities included two pedestrians, and five occupants of vehicles that collided with school buses.

Despite the smaller population and density of counties with one or no traffic deaths, as well as geographic distance from key metro areas, Public Safety officials see last year's zero fatalities as progress and as an example to other counties and municipalities.

“If every county with traffic deaths would work to reduce their fatalities by at least one, it would be great progress,” says Kathy Swanson, director of OTS. “That reduction achieved at the county level would truly drive Minnesota toward zero deaths.”

Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) is an effort led by DPS and Minnesota Department of Transportation, with partners including the Minnesota Department of Health, and Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota, to reduce crash fatalities. The effort combines the “four Es” — enforcement, engineering, emergency trauma care, and education — to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on Minnesota roads.

Crash Facts provides statistics by county and for cities with populations or more than 2,500. The report is used by legislators, highway planners and engineers, law enforcement and public health officials, and city and county government agencies.

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Editor's Note: List of “Minnesota Traffic Fatalities by County, 2005 vs. 2000–2004” is available upon request to dennis.smith@state.mn.us or nathan.bowie@state.mn.us .