



NEWS RELEASE

Andy Skoogman, Director of Communications

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CONTACT:

Nathan Bowie, 651-201-7571

2009 PEDESTRIAN DEATHS TO-DATE ECLIPSE 2008 TOTAL

Public Safety: Every Corner Is a Crosswalk

ST. PAUL — As hundreds of people take to Twin Cities' streets to run 26.2 miles this weekend, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) reports pedestrian deaths are surging. The 26 Minnesota pedestrian road deaths for 2009 are already above the 25 fatalities for 2008. At this time in 2008, 17 pedestrians were killed.

DPS is calling for increased motorist awareness of pedestrians and asking pedestrians to cross smartly and legally to combat a typically dangerous time of year for pedestrians. Autumn safety issues include a spike in foot traffic with school in session, as well as visibility challenges as the days become darker earlier. Last year, October was the deadliest month for pedestrian deaths — four were killed.

"Every corner and intersection is a crosswalk, whether it's marked or unmarked, and drivers must stop for crossing pedestrians," says Cheri Marti, director of DPS Office of Traffic Safety. "Pedestrians must cross with caution and remember that while you can see a vehicle's headlights that doesn't necessarily mean motorists can see you."

Minnesota law states pedestrians must obey traffic control devices, and when no traffic control device is present, motorists must stop for crossing pedestrians within a marked crosswalk or at an intersection with no marked crosswalk. Pedestrians must also walk on the left side of the roadway facing oncoming traffic, when possible. This practice allows for pedestrians to better react in the case of motorists swerving off the road or not paying attention. Many pedestrian-vehicle crashes occur when pedestrians are walking with traffic, with their backs to oncoming traffic.

Failure to yield the right-of-way and driver inattention/distraction are the main contributing factors in pedestrian crashes.

In 2008, pedestrians ages 15–24 accounted for one-quarter of all deaths and injuries. In 2008, 61 percent of pedestrian crashes occurred in the metro area and one-third of all pedestrian crashes occurred during afternoon rush hours. Impaired pedestrians are another factor — 44 percent of the pedestrians killed in 2008 had alcohol-concentration levels of 0.10 or higher.

In Minnesota, failing to yield right-of-way to a pedestrian is a misdemeanor and can result in up to 90 days in jail, a \$700 fine or both. A jaywalking citation is a petty misdemeanor and can cost up to \$95.

Motorists Safety Tips

Watch for pedestrians and prepare to stop if a pedestrian is approaching an intersection.

Stop for pedestrians within a marked crosswalk or at an intersection with no marked crosswalk — it's the law.

Pedestrian Safety Tips

Cross only at intersections or crosswalks.

Follow and obey all traffic signals and signs — pedestrians only have the right-of-way when traffic signals allow.

Do not enter a crosswalk if a vehicle is too close or moving too fast to stop safely.

The law requires pedestrians take responsibility for their own safety.

Wear bright and reflective clothing.

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