



NEWS RELEASE

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PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES HIT THE 20-DEATH MILESTONE FOR YEAR

ST. PAUL — The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Traffic Safety today announced preliminary traffic crash reports indicate Minnesota's pedestrian fatalities have hit the 20-death mark for the year. There were 19 pedestrian deaths at this time last year and 41 pedestrian deaths for all of 2009 — the highest number since 2005.

DPS officials are calling for increased motorist awareness of pedestrians as students return to campus and foot traffic increases to and from schools. Pedestrians are urged to cross safely and legally.

Cheri Marti, DPS Office of Traffic Safety director, says the key for motorists is to maintain a safe driving speed and be looking for pedestrians in order to react.

“Drivers must stop for crossing pedestrians and treat every corner and intersection as a crosswalk, whether it's marked or unmarked,” says Marti. “Pedestrians must cross with caution and keep in mind that motorists aren't always paying attention.”

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 should 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.

During the last three years (2007–2009), persons ages 40–49 accounted for 22 percent of the 96 pedestrian deaths. During this same period, 68 percent of pedestrian crashes occurred in urban areas and 23 percent of the crashes occurred during 6–9 p.m. Impairment is another factor — during this period, 30 percent (29) of the pedestrians killed had tested positive for alcohol.

Motorists Safety Tips

- Drive at safe speeds and pay attention for pedestrians; prepare to stop if a pedestrian is approaching an intersection. Always anticipate and be prepared for pedestrians crossing illegally.
- Stop for pedestrians within a marked crosswalk or at an intersection with no marked crosswalk — it's the law.
- When attending to or assisting vehicles on the shoulder of the road, avoid walking into the traffic lane when exiting a vehicle — stay in the vehicle if possible with the seat belt fastened. Attempt to exit the vehicle on the non-traffic side. If assisting at a crash, approach a vehicle from the non-traffic side.

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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