

# 2024-2025

## Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Annual Report

**Buckle up • Phone down • Drive sober • Slow down**



### **Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Seat Belt Enforcement Campaign Kickoff**

Rice County Public Safety Center • Faribault, Minnesota • May 2025



Jessica Schleck  
Toward Zero Deaths  
Regional Coordinator,  
Southeast Region  
October 2025



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Goal 1 – Reduce Fatal and Serious Injuries

- Regional Overview, pg. 4
- Strategic Plan, pgs. 5-6
- Background, pg. 7
- Regional Crash Data, pgs. 8-9
- Successes, pgs. 10-11
- Challenges, pg. 13
- Goals, pg. 13
- TZD Safe Roads Funded & Unfunded Coalitions, pg. 14

## Regional Community Engagement Highlights

- Workshop, pgs. 15-20
- *Crashes Hit Different* regional campaign, pgs. 21-22
- CarFit, pg. 23
- Safety Town pg. 24
- Safe City Nights, pg. 24
- Traffic Safety Messaging – TZD Tuesday, pg. 25
- Occupant Protection, pgs. 25-29
- Seat Belt Challenges, pgs. 25-26
- Seat Belt Convincer, pg. 27
- Seat Belt Curriculum, pgs. 28-29
- ATV/UTV Safety, pgs. 30-31
- Impact Teen Driver Program, pg. 32
- Impaired Driving Activities, pgs. 32-35
- JOYRIDE, pg. 35
- Speed Poster, pg. 36
- Border-to-Border Speed Saturation, pgs. 37-38
- Motorcycle Safety Education, pgs. 38-39

## Goal 2 – TZD Partnership Goals

- Building Relationships within the Region, pg. 40
- Building Relationships – Engineering, pgs. 41-42
- Building Relationships with the Media
- Kathy Cooper – TZD Star Award Media Advisory, pgs. 43-44
- Star Award Media Coverage, pg. 46
  - Regional Media Coverage, pgs. 46-62

## Mission

To create a culture for which traffic fatalities and serious injuries are no longer acceptable through the integrated application of education, engineering, enforcement and emergency medical and trauma services. These efforts will be driven by data, best practices and research.

## Values

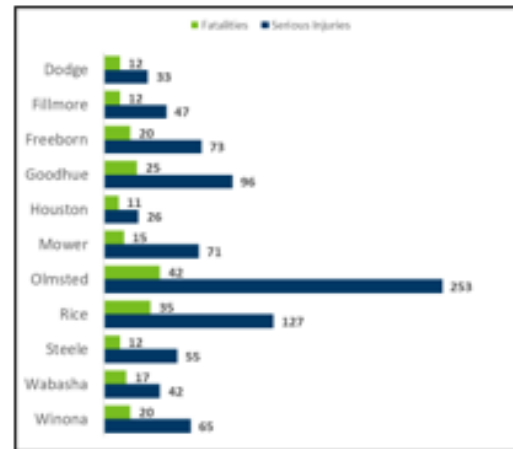
- ❖ Continuous improvements
- ❖ Engage partners
- ❖ Evidence-based approaches

The Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths program is led by a Steering Committee comprised of the "4 Es:"

- ❖ Enforcement
- ❖ Engineering
- ❖ Education
- ❖ EMS/Emergency Medical & Trauma Services



## Southeast Minnesota Fatalities and Serious Injuries by County 2020-2024



\* preliminary

The leading cause of traffic-related deaths and severe injuries in southeast Minnesota include:

- ❖ Lack of Seat Belt Use
- ❖ Speed and Aggressive Driving
- ❖ Alcohol

The leading type of crash resulting in deaths and severe injuries include:

- ❖ Careless/Reckless Driving
- ❖ Failure to Yield

The Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths program began in 2005. The counties involved include Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha and Winona.

## Southeast Minnesota TZD Leadership Contacts

### Engineering

Mark Schoenfelder  
MnDOT District Engineer  
507.286.7501  
mark.schoenfelder@state.mn.us

### Enforcement

Capt. Brian Buck  
Minnesota State Patrol  
507.285.7408  
Brian.buck@state.mn.us

### Education/EMS

Jessica Schleck  
Regional TZD Coordinator  
507.696.8435  
jessica.schleck@state.mn.us



# MINNESOTA TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

## Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Regional Strategic Plan

### Mission

To move southeast Minnesota toward zero deaths on our roads using education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical and trauma services.

### Goal 1 – Reduce TZD Fatality and Serious Injuries

To continuously decrease traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries in southeast Minnesota. from the past 5-year average of 44 fatalities and 178 serious injuries (in 2020-2024).

### Objectives:

- A. To continuously increase regional seat belt use rates.  
The statewide average was 94.2 percent in 2023, up from 93.3% in 2022.
- B. To examine the characteristics of the unbelted fatalities and serious injuries. The 2020-2024, 5-year average in southeast Minnesota was 10 unbelted fatalities and 26 serious injuries.
- C. To continuously decrease the following:

### Five Year Averages: Southeast TZD Region

	Metric	Impaired	Speed	Distraction	Unbelted	Total
CRASHES	K Crashes	9.6	10.6	2.0	10.0	41.2
	A Crashes	36.2	29.8	8.8	22.6	152.6
	K+A Crashes	45.8	40.4	10.8	32.6	193.8
INJURIES	Fatalities	9.8	11.4	2.2	10.2	44.0
	A Injuries	42.8	38.6	10.0	26.0	177.8
	K+A Injuries	52.6	50.0	12.2	36.2	221.8

Baseline Comparison						
Metric	Total Count		Average	Avg. Annual Percent Change		
	2024	2020-2024	5-year Avg.	Region	Statewide	
CRASHES	K Crashes	40	206	41	-1.0%	+2.0%
	A Crashes	179	763	153	+9.2%	+8.0%
	K+A Crashes	219	969	194	+6.9%	+6.7%
INJURIES	Fatalities	44	220	44	-0.1%	+2.9%
	A Injuries	208	889	178	+8.4%	+7.3%

\*Source: MnDOT Office of Traffic Engineering. 2024 data are preliminary.

Note: A crash may have more than one of the above listed or additional contributing factor

## **Goal 2 – TZD Partnership Goals**

To continuously increase TZD awareness and partnerships across southeast Minnesota for both the general public and traffic safety professionals

1. Establish the vision of TZD as a priority for all region, county, city (government agencies)
  - A. Engage local government involvement in TZD steering committee and workshops
  - B. Educate/promote traffic safety awareness of city/county officials
  - C. Promote city/county employee education/policies that facilitate the TZD vision

Activities: Recruitment of city and county to attend TZD event, giving TZD presentations to boards/councils, mailings/connections to Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS)

2. Create and strengthen partnerships in the region
  - A. Engage stakeholders
  - B. Develop networking relationships
  - C. Recruit membership of the TZD partnership

Activities: EMS Conference booth/presentation, regional workshop, web, calendar, statistics, workshop, orientation

3. Promote and implement effective traffic safety initiatives in the region
  - A. Develop and distribute resource materials
  - B. Provide enforcement wave support in community
  - C. Promote evidence-based countermeasures
  - D. Collect data and statistics within region
  - E. Implement best practices within region

Activities: web, brochure, one-pagers, presentations, news advisories, workshop, seat belt observational survey and omnibus survey, media messaging and media events, news releases regarding activities woven into existing messages, worksite education and policy development, parent component to driver education, sober cab development, youth enforcement and education.

## Goal 1 – Reduce Fatal and Serious Injuries

### Regional Steering Committee

**Background:** In 2006, the southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Steering Committee developed the traffic safety mission and goals for the region to move toward zero deaths for traffic-related crashes.

**Problem Statement:** In 2006, there were 494 deaths on Minnesota roadways and 69 of these deaths occurred on southeast Minnesota roadways – an unacceptable number. Southeast Minnesota TZD includes partners from the 11-county area (Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona) who work together to create initiatives and programs to reduce traffic fatalities.

A regional strategic plan was developed to identify goals and strategies required to achieve the mission. The data is reviewed yearly to ensure that the region continues to work to accomplish outreach and education goals that will help attain the overall fatality reduction goal.

**Mission:** To move southeast Minnesota toward zero deaths on our roads using education, enforcement, engineering, emergency medical and trauma services, and everyone else.

### Goal 1 – Reduce Fatal and Serious Injuries

To continuously decrease traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries in southeast Minnesota from the past **5-year average** (2020-2024) of 44 fatalities and 178 serious injuries.

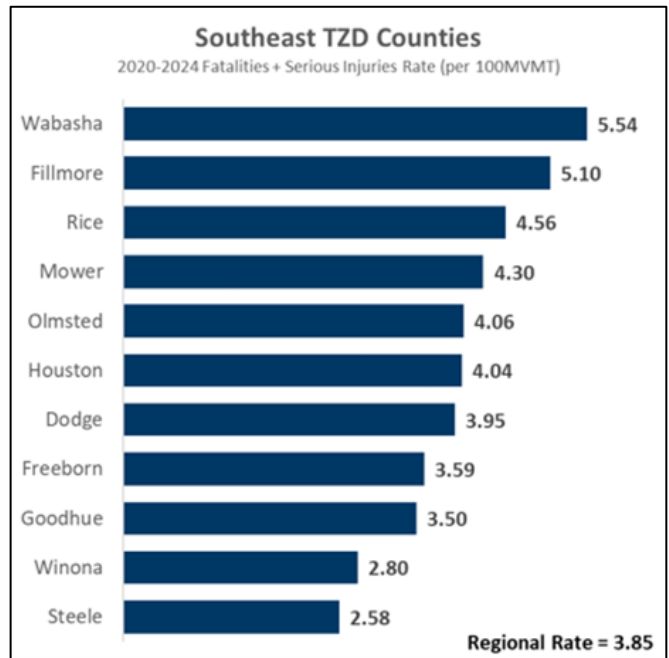
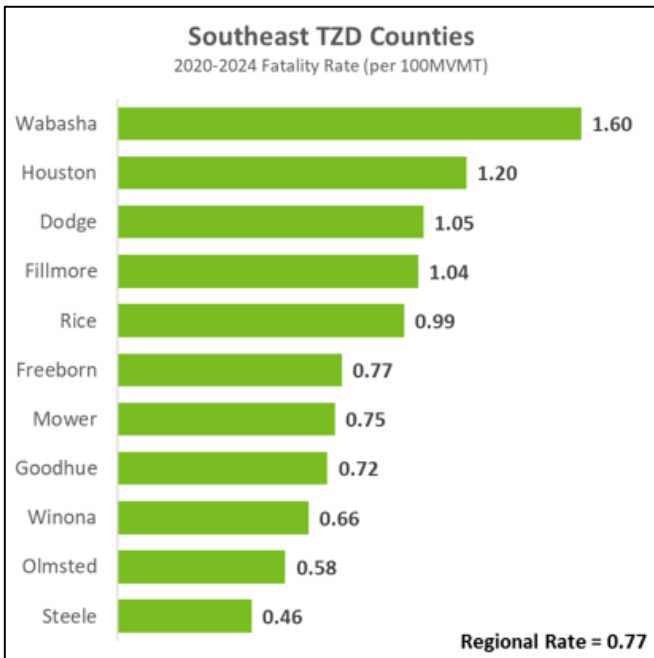
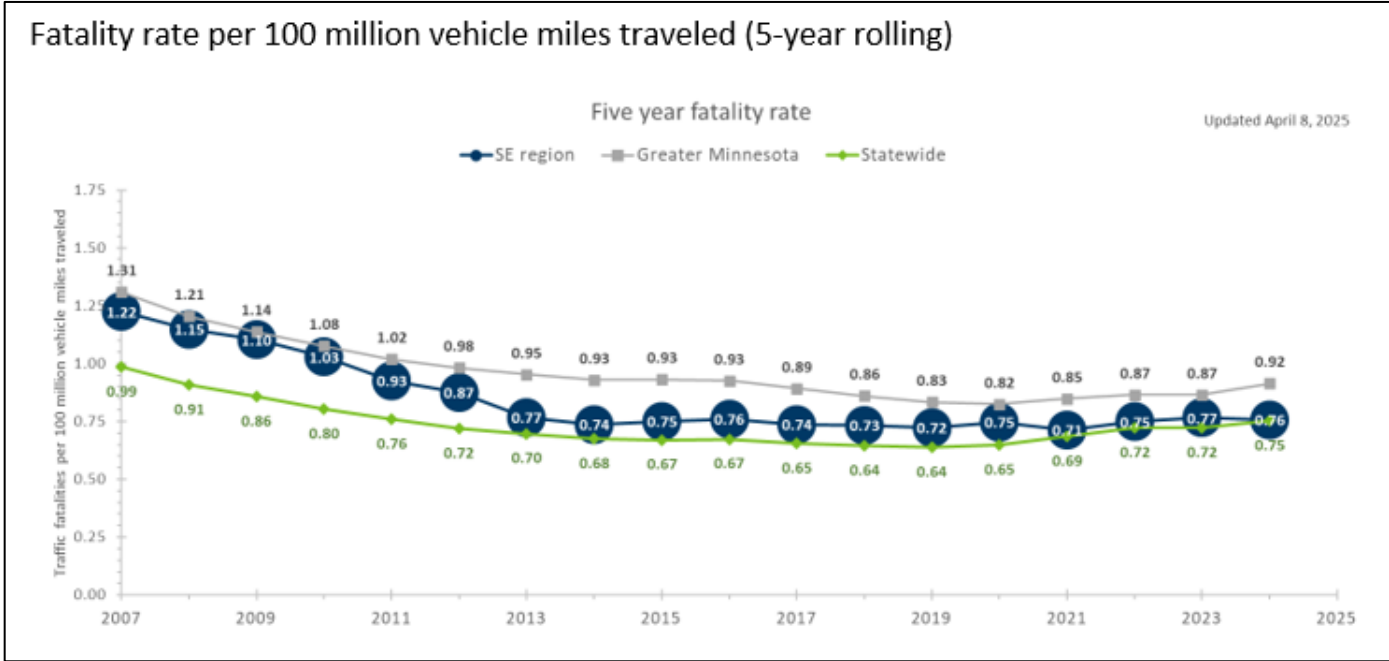
#### Five Year Averages: Southeast TZD Region

	Metric	Impaired	Speed	Distraction	Unbelted	Total
CRASHES	K Crashes	9.6	10.6	2.0	10.0	41.2
	A Crashes	36.2	29.8	8.8	22.6	152.6
	K+A Crashes	45.8	40.4	10.8	32.6	193.8
INJURIES	Fatalities	9.8	11.4	2.2	10.2	44.0
	A Injuiries	42.8	38.6	10.0	26.0	177.8
	K+A Injuries	52.6	50.0	12.2	36.2	221.8

#### 2024 Outcomes: Southeast TZD Region

	Metric	Impaired	Speed	Distraction	Unbelted	Total
CRASHES	K Crashes	8	12	1	8	40
	A Crashes	37	33	13	26	179
	K+A Crashes	45	45	14	34	219
INJURIES	Fatalities	8	13	1	8	44
	A Injuiries	44	47	14	28	208
	K+A Injuries	52	60	15	36	252

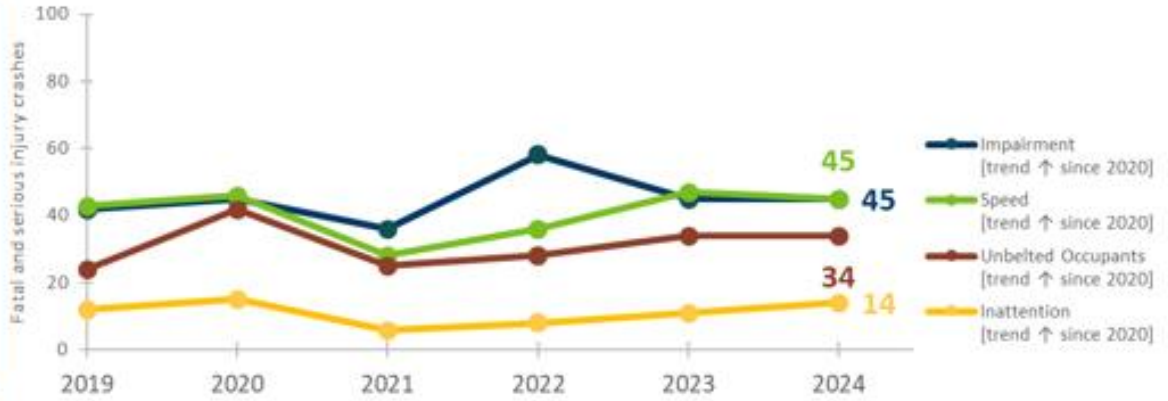
# 2020-2024 Fatalities, Serious Injuries and Motor Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Rates by County



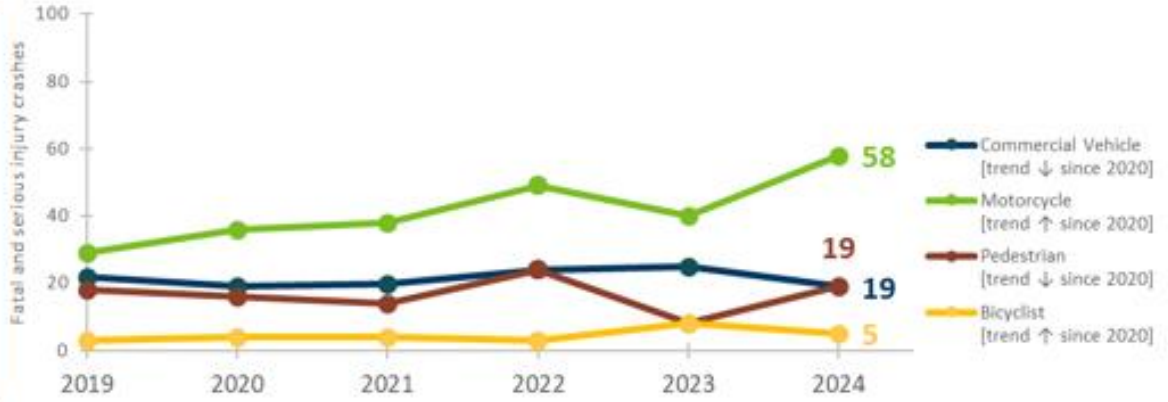
## Time of Day and Time of Year for Southeast Fatal and Serious Injury Crashes (2018-2022)

Time	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total	%
Midnight to 2:59 AM	7	3	2	5	9	5	2	10	7	5	8	3	66	7.4%
3:00 AM to 5:59 AM	2	3	5	3	5	3	8	3	8	2	3	1	46	5.2%
6:00 AM to 8:59 AM	6	7	4	6	7	5	5	11	5	12	8	13	89	10.0%
9:00 AM to 11:59 AM	9	7	8	8	8	16	14	11	13	8	9	4	115	13.0%
Noon to 2:59 PM	6	11	2	5	7	15	19	22	17	9	10	11	134	15.1%
3:00 PM to 5:59 PM	11	9	5	14	23	26	19	24	15	12	18	14	190	21.4%
6:00 PM to 8:59 PM	5	10	7	7	18	16	21	20	17	11	11	12	155	17.5%
9:00 PM to 11:59 PM	1	4	7	5	12	11	15	12	8	8	7	3	93	10.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
	5.3%	6.1%	4.5%	6.0%	10.0%	10.9%	11.6%	12.7%	10.1%	7.5%	8.3%	6.9%		

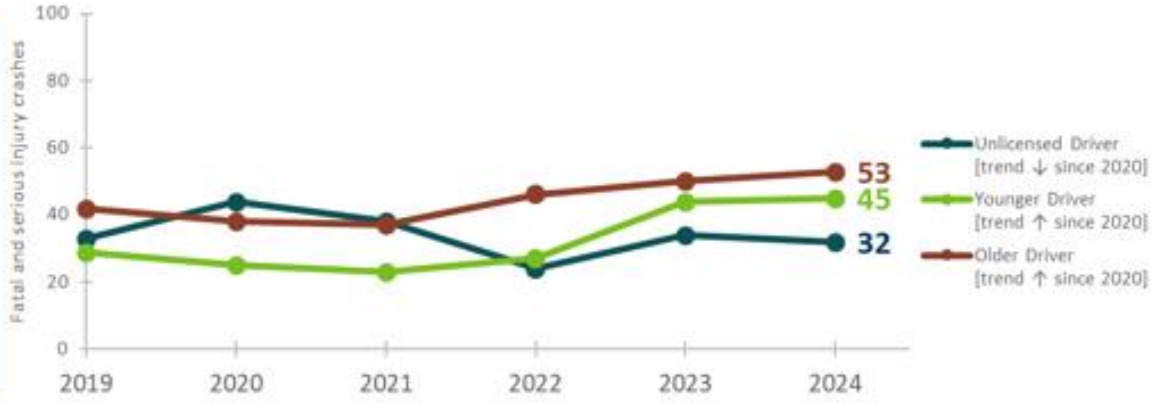
# BEHAVIORS



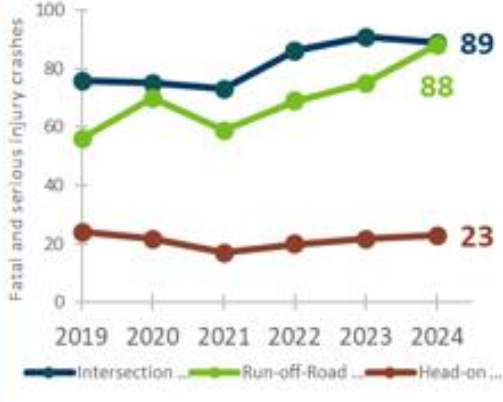
# MODES



# DRIVERS



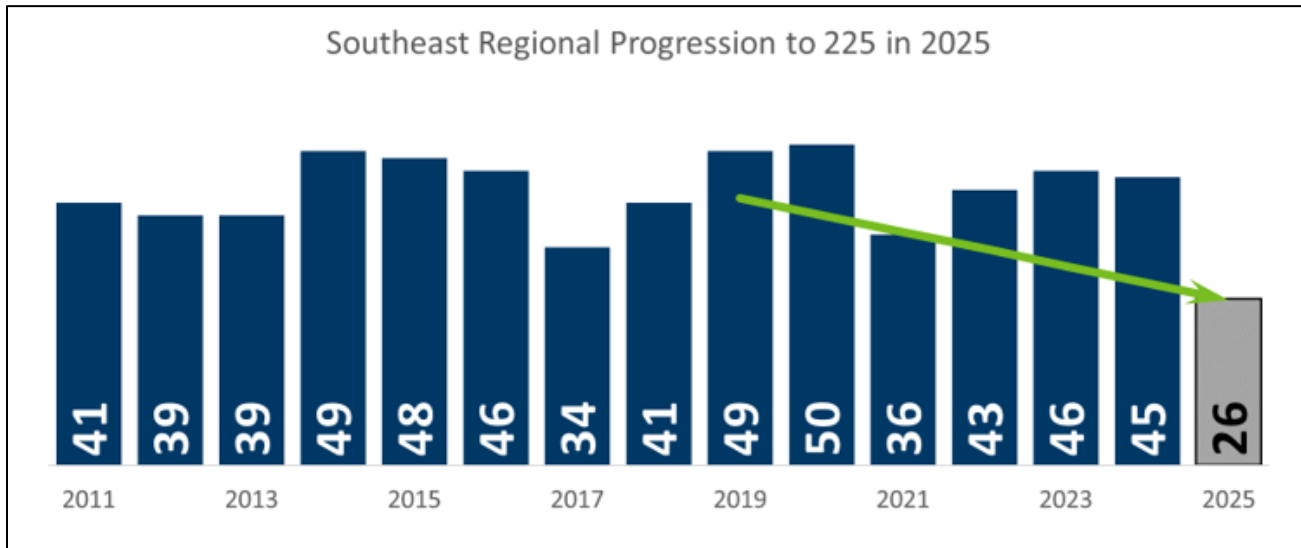
# ENGINEERING



# COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS



## How Does the REGION Contribute?



The chart above shows trends in fatalities from 2011 to 2024 within the Southeast TZD Region. The green bar shows the necessary progress required to meet our target goal of no more than 225 fatalities statewide in 2025. Statewide, this translates into 23 fewer traffic fatalities every year. The regional numbers are scaled based on the number of fatalities within the TZD Region from 2016-2018.

### Successes:

- Partnered with AAA to launch a regional fall 2025 traffic safety, "Crashes Hit Different" campaign. It was designed to engage high school students at peak times. The region hosted eight events in September 2025, reaching students, parents and staff from 16 schools with the central message: "Crashes Hit Different When They Happen to You." This engaging strategy included pre-game activities using drunk goggles, t-shirt cannon giveaways, halftime education, distribution of TZD and AAA swag, stickers for concession snacks, foam footballs, and a pledging banner where students, parents and staff can publicly commit to essential safe driving behaviors: Buckle Up, Phone Down, Drive Sober, and Slow Down. This comprehensive approach had a wide reach and drove home the personal responsibility element of traffic safety. There are 16 additional events scheduled through October 2025, reaching a total of 48 schools.
- Traffic safety education was provided to male and female inmates at the Goodhue County Adult Detention Center. The inmates received a 30-minute TZD presentation, along with the opportunity to try the distracted driving simulator and to attempt to maneuver an obstacle course with a pedal cart while wearing drunk goggles. Other stations included wearing drunk goggles while playing bean bags and while playing basketball.
- The annual Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Workshop brought together nearly 170 traffic-safety professionals. This event is vital for facilitating a collaborative,<sup>10</sup>

regional approach necessary to reduce traffic deaths and severe injuries across all southeast Minnesota communities.

- Expanded outreach to Older Drivers in three counties using the CarFit program and the distribution of 150 Older Driver manuals.
- Traffic safety education to high school students in at least one high school in each of the 11 counties. Programs offered impactful elements including impact speakers, mock crashes, and hands-on experiences using the impaired and cannabis goggles, the distracted driving simulator and the seat belt convincer. Students were also given the opportunity to make a pledge to commit to safe driving.
- Continued to develop partnerships with Wisconsin State Patrol, various law enforcement agencies from Wisconsin as well as the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.
- Community outreach education with events focused on:
  - Seat belt use
  - Impaired driving including cannabis education
  - Distracted driving
  - Speeding
  - Hands-free Law
  - Motorcycle Safety – Lane Splitting and Filtering
  - Pedestrian Safety
  - Bicycle Safety
  - Traffic-Safety Culture – Do it For Them
  - ATV/UTV Safety – Seat Belt Law
  - Older Driver

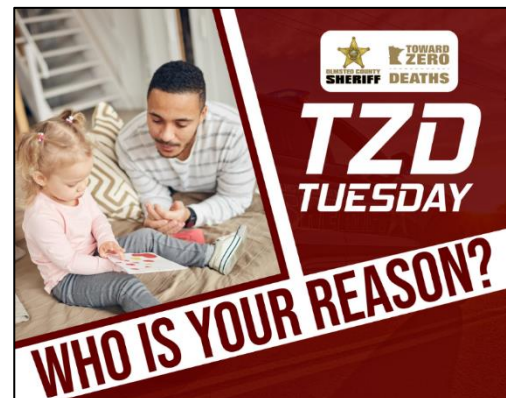


- Continued partnership with Olmsted County Sheriff's Office social media specialist to create numerous social media videos to coincide with enforcement periods. Many of the videos included an emphasis on changing traffic-safety culture. See examples below.

[Move Over and Slow Down for Flashing Lights](#)

[Wear Your Helmet Do It for Them](#)

[Drive Safely this Holiday Season.](#)



- Continued partnership with Olmsted County Sheriff's Office social media specialist to create social media posts to coincide with enforcement periods and TZD Tuesday. On average 3,000 people were reached per TZD post, but some messages reached a larger audience. The Highway 14 Border-to-Border

(B2B) enforcement social media post reached 45,595 people and had 9,174 engagements. The Back-to-School/TZD Tuesday post reached 10,764 people and the Move Over Day Video had more than 2000 views and reached 4,259 people.

- One-on-one support, both virtual and in person was provided for many of the new TZD Safe Roads coordinators to help them transition into their new roles. Template materials corresponding with the quarterly enforcement periods were created for coordinators statewide to modify and use in their communities. Monthly in-person team meetings focused on coordinating work plans and developing regional projects to help set both the coordinators and the region up for success!
- Continued to develop relationships with local media. KTTC-TV, KIMT-TV, KAAL-TV, Rochester Post-Bulletin, Dodge County Independent, Star Herald and KROC talk radio covered regional enforcement saturations and events.
- Worked with county engineers and southeast TZD law enforcement grantees to continue to identify locations for replacement of the Safe & Sober signs. More than 200 Safe & Sober signs have been replaced with updated TZD signs across the region.
- Local government presentations included the TZD mission, vision, and goals as well as updates on local efforts, successes, and challenges. State and local TZD representatives from each of the 5 Es were invited.
- Appointed to the Advisory Council for Traffic Safety (ACTS). The council aims to improve traffic safety by advising the governor and relevant state commissioner on policies, programs and services that affect traffic safety.
- Participated in Advisory Council for Traffic Safety (ACTS) Subcommittees: TZD Safe Roads subcommittee reviewed successes and challenges pertaining to the TZD Safe Roads grant opportunity and how to expand the efforts. The committee will be recommending to the ACTS Council updating the Serious and Fatal Injury review process to ensure consistency across the state.



Traffic Incident Management (TIM) subcommittee. The subcommittee has prioritized working toward updating quick clearance legislation. The goal is to have specific legislative change requests included in the January 2027 report. This timeline will allow the team to develop strategic and thoughtful recommendations.

- Participated in the Traffic Safety Camera (TSC) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The purpose of the committee is to review periodic deliverables and use subject matter expertise to help guide the creation of standards for traffic safety cameras.
- Completed monthly reports accurately and timely.

## Challenges:

- While the strategy is to leverage regional partners for outreach and education, these partners are already managing heavy, multifaceted workloads. Their limited existing capacity restricts their ability to absorb additional traffic safety responsibilities, making the recruitment of volunteers increasingly difficult.
- A decrease in grant funding led to an influx of new TZD Safe Roads Coalition Coordinators with limited prior traffic safety experience. Mentoring these new leaders and developing essential template materials became a necessary, but time-intensive, requirement for regional success.
- Educational equipment that is critical to community engagement is shared across the entire region. Unfortunately, equipment is frequently returned damaged. When this occurs, partners consistently refuse to take responsibility, so the cost and labor required for repairs and purchasing replacement parts defaults entirely to the district office.

## Regional Goals for 2026:

- The Steering Committee will use the 2025-2029 Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) as its guiding framework to establish regional priorities for 2026. Data analysis indicates the top five critical focus areas in the southeast region are Lane Departure, Intersections, Impairment, Older Drivers, and Unbelted Occupants. The committee will review the SHSP strategies and tactics for each area to identify targeted interventions designed for the greatest impact in reducing fatal and serious injuries across the region. Achieving this is a shared responsibility involving engineers, educators, enforcement, emergency responders, policymakers, and the public.
- The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has reported a concerning rise in ATV fatalities and serious injuries. During 2024, the state saw a record-setting 30 fatalities, underscoring the severe and increasing risks associated with these machines. The region is committed to working with the Mayo Clinic Trauma Injury Prevention team to host an ATV train-the-trainer course. This will ensure that the course will be available to more students across the region.
- The region has committed to hosting two Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Responder trainings in 2026. This 4-hour responder training promotes responder safety, safe and quick clearance, and prompt, reliable communications.
- Impairment has been identified as one of the top five focus areas in the southeast region. To address this, the region has committed to hosting a Responsible Beverage Service Train-the-Trainer in 2026. The trainers will be certified to educate servers and bartenders on their vital role in traffic safety. Training servers to recognize signs of impairment and safely refuse to overserve customers will prevent impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel, significantly reducing alcohol-related crashes across the region.

## TZD Safe Roads Coalitions - Funded and Unfunded



### Active funded coalitions

Assisted and supported the funded TZD Safe Roads coordinators in various capacities throughout the year with supplies needed, assistance with events or directing to appropriate resources. Regional coordinator developed template materials for coalition leaders across the state.

- Dodge
- Fillmore
- Goodhue
- Houston
- Rice
- Steele

### Active unfunded coalitions

Facilitated the Mower County Safe Roads coalitions. Was responsible for maintaining the coalition networks, meeting agendas, minutes and all activities and events as requested.

- Mower County
- Olmsted County

### Next Steps:

The regional coordinator will continue to partner with the funded and unfunded TZD Safe Roads coalition leaders to develop regional activities for the enforcement periods. The TZD Safe Roads Coalition coordinators will continue to work with the Steering Committee and the regional coordinator to use the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) to establish regional priorities and implement targeted interventions across the region.

## Regional Workshop

### Southeast Minnesota TZD Workshop

#### May 7, 2025

The [2025 Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths Workshop](#) was held at the International Event Center in Rochester Wednesday, May 7, 2025. More than 150 traffic safety professionals representing all 11 counties participated in the event. Use the link above to find additional information, including workshop presentation slides. See media coverage on page 60.



The Southeast Minnesota TZD program aims to create a collaborative, comprehensive and regional approach to reduce traffic deaths and severe injuries. As part of these efforts, an annual workshop is held to help facilitate the implementation of TZD in all southeast Minnesota communities. Encouraged to attend are law enforcement, engineers, educators, emergency medical services, local policymakers, and other traffic safety advocates.

The workshop participants are surveyed annually and each year the survey respondents rate the workshop with high marks and urge the planning team to continue to have the workshop annually. Anecdotally, the networking and forming of relationships across the 4E boundaries continue in southeast Minnesota.





**Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths  
Regional Workshop  
Rochester Event Center  
7333 Airport View Drive SW  
Wednesday, May 7, 2025  
8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.**

## **Agenda**

- 8:30 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast**
- 9 a.m. Welcome & Regional Roundup**  
*Mark Schoenfelder, District engineer, MnDOT District 6, and southeast Minnesota TZD regional co-chair; Jessica Schleck, southeast Minnesota TZD regional coordinator*
- 9:30 a.m. Driving Change: How Data is Shaping Safer Roads for All**  
*Brandon Walters, MnCrash administrator, DPS Office of Traffic Safety*  
This presentation will highlight the Road Safety Information Center (RSIC), which uses data-driven insights and advanced analytics to enhance safety, improve accessibility and identifying better strategies to serve underrepresented communities for a more informed, equitable decision-making.
- 9:45 a.m. Tech Makeover: Upgrading from Old School to Cool School**  
*Brandon Walters, MnCrash administrator, DPS Office of Traffic Safety*  
In this session, we'll explore the MnCrash reporting system modernization, focusing on its user-friendly updates, enhanced data collection through technology and seamless integration into your workflow – making it more efficient and intuitive.
- 10 a.m. Building the Road Ahead: Shaping Our Future with Stakeholder Input and Strategic Action**  
*Derek Leuer, State Traffic Safety engineer, MnDOT Office of Traffic Engineering*  
In this session, we'll explore the journey of developing our new Strategic Highway Safety Plan, from gathering feedback to finalizing the vision for the future. We'll highlight how stakeholder input shaped the plan and discuss the key steps for its rollout, including communication, implementation, and monitoring. Attendees will leave with a clear understanding of the plan's impact and how we'll work together to achieve our goals.
- 10:30 a.m. Break – Exhibits & Refreshments**
- 10:45 a.m. From Urban to Rural: Strengthening Traffic Incident Management in Minnesota**  
*Brian Kary, TSMO Director, MnDOT Transportation Systems Management and Operations*  
Traffic Incident Management (TIM) focuses on the critical collaboration between agencies to clear incidents quickly and safely, reducing injuries, fatalities, and congestion. This session will highlight the key components of TIM, including the role of coalitions, effective communication, and upcoming training to ensure a coordinated response. Learn how TIM helps improve safety for both responders and the public while minimizing the impact of traffic incidents. Whether you're a first responder, law enforcement, or a traffic safety advocate, this session is for you!

- 11:15 a.m.     **Exploring the Impacts of Mental Health on our Roadways**  
*Julie Seitz, LADC, LGSW, project director, Allrise Impaired Driving Solutions*  
 Nationally, 45 percent of repeat DWI offenders have a mental health disorder and more could be done to address this issue. Hear from the panelists about what is happening and what can be done.
- 12 p.m.       **Lunch & Exhibits**
- 12:45 p.m.    **AI: The Future, Rewritten – Beyond Imagination, From Code to Cognition**  
*From Bethany Lutheran College: Brian Klebig, professor, Communication Dept; Ben Lundsten, assistant professor, Media Arts Dept.; Sheng Sang, assistant professor, Engineering Science Dept.*  
 This session explores how AI is reshaping industries and revolutionizing problem-solving across sectors like public safety, education, healthcare and engineering. Through storytelling and real-world examples, we'll uncover AI's transformative power, showcasing its ability to fix broken systems, optimize decision-making, and improve outcomes. Gain valuable insights into how AI can enhance efficiency and drive meaningful change in their daily work.
- 1:45 p.m.     **Innovative Strategies that can be used to Address Traffic Safety Issues in Your Community**  
*Hear what is being done across the region and how to get involved!*
- **What is all the Buzz Around DOSCI Older Driver Screening? Let's Take a Closer Look!**  
*Dr. Joanie Somes, Minnesota Emergency Nurses Association*  
 This session will explore the latest tool designed to spot cognitive impairment, which may interfere with the ability to drive safely. Explore what these screenings assess, how occupational therapists and driving rehab specialists can help and the smart options they recommend to keep everyone safe on the road.
  - **Lane Splitting or Lane Filtering?**  
*Jay Bock, Motorcycle Safety administrator, DPS Office of Traffic Safety*  
 Beginning July 1, 2025, Minnesota will allow motorcyclists to ride between lanes of slow or stopped traffic. Advocates pushed for this change after seeing crashes caused by distracted drivers, arguing that lane splitting helps riders avoid danger. While the law includes restrictions to reduce risks, the question remains – will it be enough to keep motorcyclists safe?
  - **Fungus Amongus**  
*Brenda Pohlman, Fillmore County Public Health*  
 As cannabis legalization expands in Minnesota, mind and mood-altering products are following. This session will take you on a magical trip to explore the impact of microdosing fungi on traffic safety and potential strategies to address the fungus amongus.
- 2:45 p.m.     **Wrap up, Evaluation & Door Prizes**  
*Lt. Brett Hayes, Minnesota State Patrol, District 2100*  
 Take a moment to reflect on today's insights—how can you turn them into action in your community? Grab a notecard from your table and jot down your goals! We'll collect everyone's ideas and share them after the workshop so we can inspire each other to make real change happen. Let's get writing!
- Please take time throughout the day to visit the traffic safety exhibit tables!*
- Venue WiFi Network: Private Guest**  
**Password: riec2019**



**Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths**  
**2025 Southeast Regional Workshop**

**Evaluation Summary**

Rochester Event Center – Rochester  
Wednesday, May 7, 2025

Number of participants registered: 150

Number of participants registered plus walk-ins: 175

Total number of attendees (registered & walk-ins participants & exhibitors minus no-shows): 153

Number of Qualtrics evaluations complete: 52 (34%)

Number of Exhibitors: 9

<b>General Sessions</b>	<b>Average Rating (out of 4.00)</b>
Welcome to the Southeast TZD Regional Workshop!	3.29
Driving Change: How Data is Shaping Safer Roads for All	3.21
Tech Makeover: Upgrading from Old School to Cool School	2.98
Building the Road Ahead: Shaping Our Future with Stakeholder Input and Strategic Action	3.13
From Urban to Rural: Strengthening Traffic Incident Management in Minnesota	3.29
Exploring the Impacts of Mental Health on our Roadways	3.58
AI Presentation (AI: The Future, Rewritten – Beyond Imagination, From Code to Cognition)	3.21
What is all the Buzz Around DOSCI Older Driver Screening?	3.50
Lane Splitting or Lane Filtering?	2.88
Fungus Amungus	3.21
Wrap-up	3.13

<b>Arrangements</b>	<b>Average Rating (out of 4.00)</b>
Convenience of the Registration Process	3.55
Location of the venue	3.69
Facilities were comfortable and appropriate	3.75
Food served for meals and breaks was satisfying	3.73
Electronic participant materials were helpful and useful	NA for 2025
Exhibitors were informative	3.16

**Please write any comments about the general sessions.**

- Some early presenters zipped through interesting slides too quickly
- Real good
- Good time for collaboration.
- Love this work can't wait to do more
- Everything was good.
- Hands down, best food at a conference.
- Great variety of presentations.
- The post it activity was confusing. It was not clear at our table what we were meant to do. Wasn't there a new sticker inactive done?
- Please host these in locations that are bike, walk, roll, and transit accessible. This was not.
- Some very interesting topics. Great food. I truly enjoyed networking with other state and county agency employees.
- In the past you had "roving" microphones", I would like to see them come back. During the question & answer section of some of the presentations if a question was asked from the other side of the room you would like to hear the question.
- All very informative and valuable knowledge shared. All speakers were great! Interested in hearing more about what to do with the SHSP. Sounds like some things to implement here.
- This conference was very good prefers the best, great contexts and very interesting.
- The sessions, overall, were very informative. The lane splitting portion seemed to lack information.
- Far too much data speak and words on slides for the first half of the day. The Mental Health speaker was engaging and interactive in a meaningful way. Much of the crowd was scrolling phones or using computers during the first several presentations that were not very interesting or engaging.
- This year's conference was much more engineering focused it seemed like. It'd be nice to have more LE focused topics such as legal updates, new tech coming out, updates on road side drug impairment testing, etc.
- The motorcycle guy was uninformed, loud and unable to answer questions.
- Less engineering

**Do you believe it would be beneficial to start a Regional or Community Tribal Coalition in your area?**

- No (9)
- Yes (17)
- Not Applicable in my region (22)
- No answer (4)

**Please write any comments on the arrangements** (registration, location, food, materials, and exhibitors)

- Please label the food. The muffins weren't labeled, and I am allergic to bananas—I caught it before trying it.
- Very good food.
- No issues. Everything was great.
- Amish communities is a big deal in Fillmore County.
- Love Bunny's coconut cake

**Do you have suggestions for topics you would like to see offered at future workshops?**

- Impacts of drunk driving
- Presentation by Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
- Trends on average vehicle size and weight; connection with traffic safety inside and outside of vehicle
- Safe intersection design.
- Law enforcement updates - Statutes, Crash Reporting, what agencies in our area are doing to promote TZD
- Safety Culture: How we arrive at our beliefs and build upon negative safety habits.
- Engineering safety topics. What's happening with rural EMS? Telemedicine?
- I think it would be beneficial to maybe see what different jurisdictions, such as cities and counties, are doing to help prevent incidents. To then cross reference that info would be good to see.
- More from State Patrol on safety and incidents across the state pertaining to DOT snow and ice events and Distracted driving.
- Impact speaker at the beginning of the day to get people to focus on the topics that follow.

**What are your suggestions for building and maintaining support for this region's Minnesota TZD program?**

- Monthly emails for what agencies are doing in our area.
- I would like to see a method of bringing in younger generations, maybe as speakers or part of the attendees. We need the word to go out to a more diverse group.
- Need more organized efforts with multiple Es, so we can keep driving to zero deaths. Tribal coalition or some efforts there? Teen TZD efforts?
- Maybe have a district TZD coalition that meets regularly to discuss plans and programs that are in place.

**If you would like a follow-up call, please put your contact information in:**

N/A

**Any other comments or suggestions are welcome**

- One of the lecturers made a comment that our roads were not done with equity in mind and were not diverse to certain demographics. This was not explained. I can only guess, meaning our rural highways are not as well maintained as those near metropolitan areas.
- I was glad that I was able to go and hope to be able to attend future conferences.
- The AI professor and the mental health practitioner were keyed into what an adult learner audience perhaps needs. The other presenters appeared to simply be presenting data which was either too far from applicable (for my role) or presented in a dry and unappealing way.

## Community Engagement Highlights

- **Crashes Hit Different – High School Football and Volleyball Games**

The region partnered with AAA to launch a major fall traffic safety, "Crashes Hit Different" campaign. It was designed to engage high school students at peak times. The region hosted eight events in September 2025, reaching students, parents and staff from 16 schools with the central message: "Crashes Hit Different When They Happen to You." This engaging strategy included pre-game activities using drunk goggles, t-shirt cannon giveaways, halftime education, distribution of TZD and AAA swag, stickers for concession snacks, foam footballs, and a pledging banner where students, parents and staff can publicly commit to essential safe driving behaviors: Buckle Up, Phone Down, Drive Sober, and Slow Down. This comprehensive approach had a wide reach and drove home the personal responsibility element of traffic safety.





- **CarFit**

CarFit is an educational program designed to help older drivers optimize their vehicle's safety features to improve comfort and safety while driving. It includes teaching participants how to adjust their vehicle settings, such as the seat, steering wheel, and seat belt to ensure a proper fit. CarFit events were conducted in 30 percent of Southeast Minnesota counties, including Wabasha, Rice and Olmsted.



**CARFIT**  
Is Headed Your Way!

CarFit is a free, interactive and educational program designed to improve older driver safety. Trained volunteers provide information to ensure the safest "fit" for older drivers and their vehicles.

**Where:** FiftyNorth  
1651 Jefferson Parkway  
Northfield, MN 55057

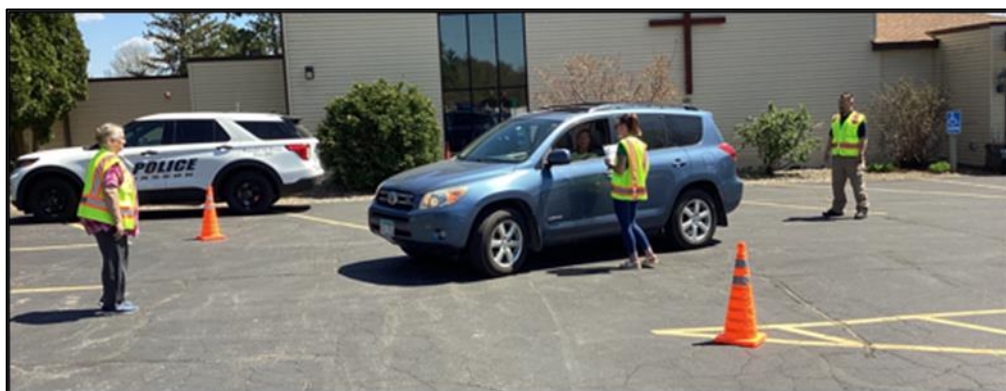
**When:** 1:30-4:30 p.m.  
Sign up for 1/2 hour appointment  
Monday, May 12, 2025

**Contact:** Michelle Brant, Program Coordinator  
Phone: (657) 864-3707  
Email: Michelle.Loken@fiftynorth.org

To learn more, visit  
[Car-Fit.org](http://Car-Fit.org)

**CARFIT**  
Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Safest Fit

ACA AARP



- **Safety Town – Fillmore County**

The miniature city allows students to get hands-on traffic safety education in a controlled environment. Children practice safely navigating streets as pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. This educational model was successfully used in Preston at School-aged Child Care, during Gammel Dag Days in Peterson and at the Fillmore County Fair.



- **Safe City Nights**

TZD partnered with the Minnesota State Patrol, the Rochester Police Department, and the Mayo Clinic Trauma Injury Prevention team to participate in four Rochester Safe City Nights.

Safe City Nights is a community engagement event that focuses on building positive connections between the community and law enforcement. Safe City Nights featured the State Patrol Rollover simulator, State Patrol helicopter, K9 demonstrations, hands-on experiences with the Emergency Response Unit, a tour of the crime scene vehicle, and many 4E partnerships across the community. An estimated 5,000 people attended Safe City Nights events across Rochester.



- ***TZD Tuesday Messages***

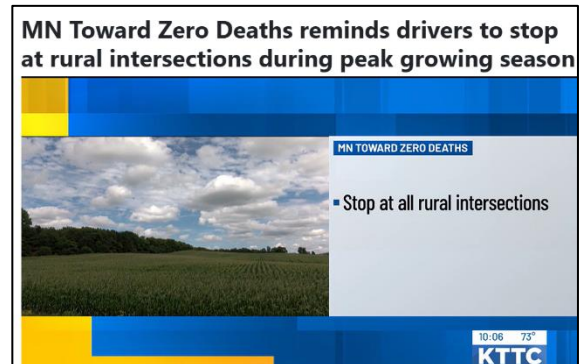
TZD Tuesday kicked off Nov. 8, 2020. Partnered with the Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety and MnDOT District 6 Public Affairs to develop traffic safety messages for employers to send to employees each Tuesday. The

short messages include information about various traffic-safety topics relevant to the week or month. The templates are distributed to regional coordinators to modify and distribute as they wish. Current active employers include MnDOT District 6, Dodge, Olmsted and Steele County, and the city of Rochester. The messages are also sent to the Steering Committee and Safe Roads coalitions to modify and use in their areas. The messages are modified and used in social media posts for MnDOT District 6, the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office, as well as other local agencies and traffic safety stakeholders. The messages are also sent to subscribers of MnDOT District 6 "Safety Topics". KTTV-TV also shares the messages. Example below. Additional media coverage on pgs. 61-62. [MN Toward Zero Deaths reminds drivers to stop at rural intersections](#)

The templates are distributed to regional coordinators to modify and distribute as they wish. Current active employers include MnDOT District 6, Dodge, Olmsted and Steele County, and the city of Rochester. The messages are also sent to the Steering Committee and Safe Roads coalitions to modify and use in their areas. The messages are modified and used in social media posts for MnDOT District 6, the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office, as well as other local agencies and traffic safety stakeholders. The messages are also sent to subscribers of MnDOT District 6 "Safety Topics". KTTV-TV also shares the messages. Example below. Additional media coverage on pgs. 61-62. [MN Toward Zero Deaths reminds drivers to stop at rural intersections](#)

The messages are modified and used in social media posts for MnDOT District 6, the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office, as well as other local agencies and traffic safety stakeholders. The messages are also sent to subscribers of MnDOT District 6 "Safety Topics". KTTV-TV also shares the messages. Example below. Additional media coverage on pgs. 61-62. [MN Toward Zero Deaths reminds drivers to stop at rural intersections](#)

[MN Toward Zero Deaths reminds drivers to stop at rural intersections](#)



Just a few of the region's active social media pages to Like, Follow and Share!

- [Goodhue County Toward Zero Deaths](#)
- [Houston County Public Health](#)
- [Olmsted County Sheriff's Office](#)
- [Rice County Public Health](#)
- [Wabasha County Public Health](#)
- [Winona County Toward Zero Deaths](#)
- [MnDOT Southeast Minnesota](#)

## **Regional Occupant Protection Education Highlights**

Occupant protection efforts focused on partnering with law enforcement on a regional level with the various mobilizations, as well as engaging communities using the Seat Belt Convincer, the Seat Belt Persuader, Seat Belt Challenges, and the *Under the Bar* booster seat display. We will continue to prioritize safety in 2026 through educational campaigns, coordinating law enforcement mobilizations, and strengthening our regional efforts in occupant protection.

- ***Regional Seat Belt Challenges***

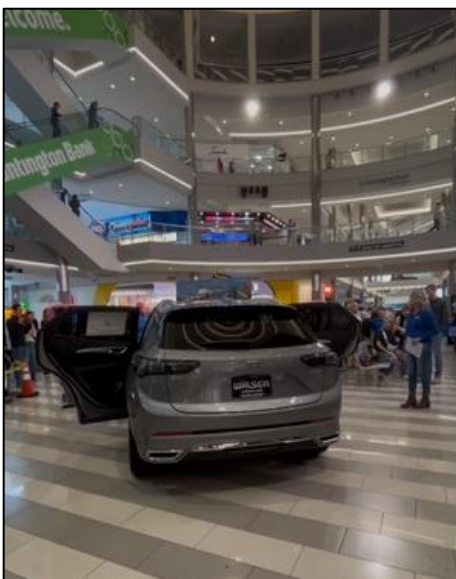
Students from across the region participated in a Regional Seat Belt Challenge to kick off the Seat Belt enforcement campaign. Students were timed on how quickly they could move to each seating position in a car and buckle up. Some of the participating schools included: Kasson-Mantorville High School, Triton High School, Hayfield High School, Medford High School, Mabel-Canton High School and Northfield.



- **Mall of America Seat Belt Championship**

Law Enforcement Explorers from across Minnesota had an opportunity to compete in the 2025 Seat Belt Challenge at the annual Statewide Law Enforcement Explorer Conference in Rochester in April. The eight fastest teams from the qualifying rounds advanced to the playoffs, to compete for the overall championship at the Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Traffic Safety Day at the Mall of America.

The fastest team was named Traffic Safety Day Champion, earning recognition for their seat belt safety advocacy and law enforcement skills.



- **Seat Belt Convincer Highlights**

The Seat Belt Convincer is an impactful educational tool used at high schools and community events across the region to drive home the importance of wearing a seat belt. The device allows a person to safely experience the actual force of a 5–10 mph crash, dramatically demonstrating why belts are critical.



These educational events also focus on proper seat belt fit and use. For families with young children, the *Under the Bar* display is used alongside materials clarifying the booster seat law. This system helps determine when a child is ready to safely transition from a booster seat to a vehicle's seat belt.

The display provides a critical visual cue: If a child can walk under the bar, the vehicle's seat belt will not fit them properly, confirming they are not tall enough for safe seat belt use. This simple, hands-on demonstration is highly effective in helping caregivers and children understand the importance of remaining in a booster seat until the child achieves the necessary height for proper belt placement.

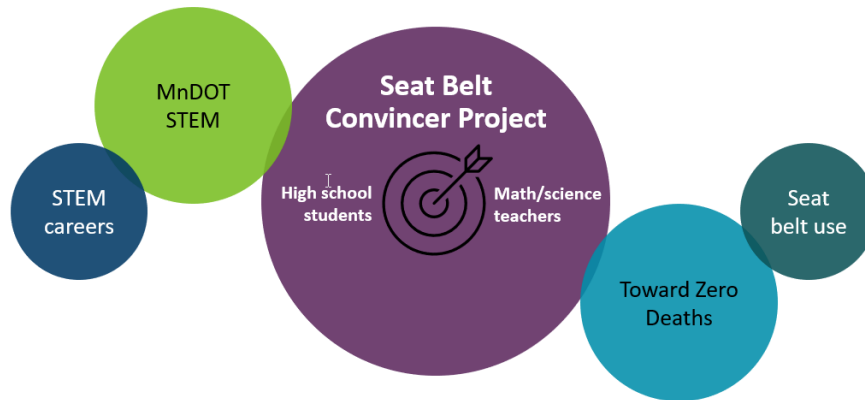


Events included:

- Night to Unite – Wabasha
- Owatonna Fire Department Open House
- Kasson Free Fair
- Goodhue High School
- Spring Grove
- Blooming Prairie High School
- Safe Summer Nights – Faribault
- Bethlehem Academy – Faribault
- Steele County
- Safe City Nights – Rochester
- Cannon Falls Chamber of Commerce Open House



- **Seat Belt Convincer Curriculum**  
Teaching Safety Through Physics



The Seat Belt Convincer curriculum was developed as a creative way for MnDOT/TZD to reach high school students across the region. The 20-minute curriculum uses Newton’s *Laws of Motion* to explain the physics of a crash and relate speed to force.

Newton’s 1<sup>st</sup> Law: An object in motion tends to stay in motion unless an external force acts upon it.  
Newton’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Law: When a force acts on an object, it will cause the object to accelerate.

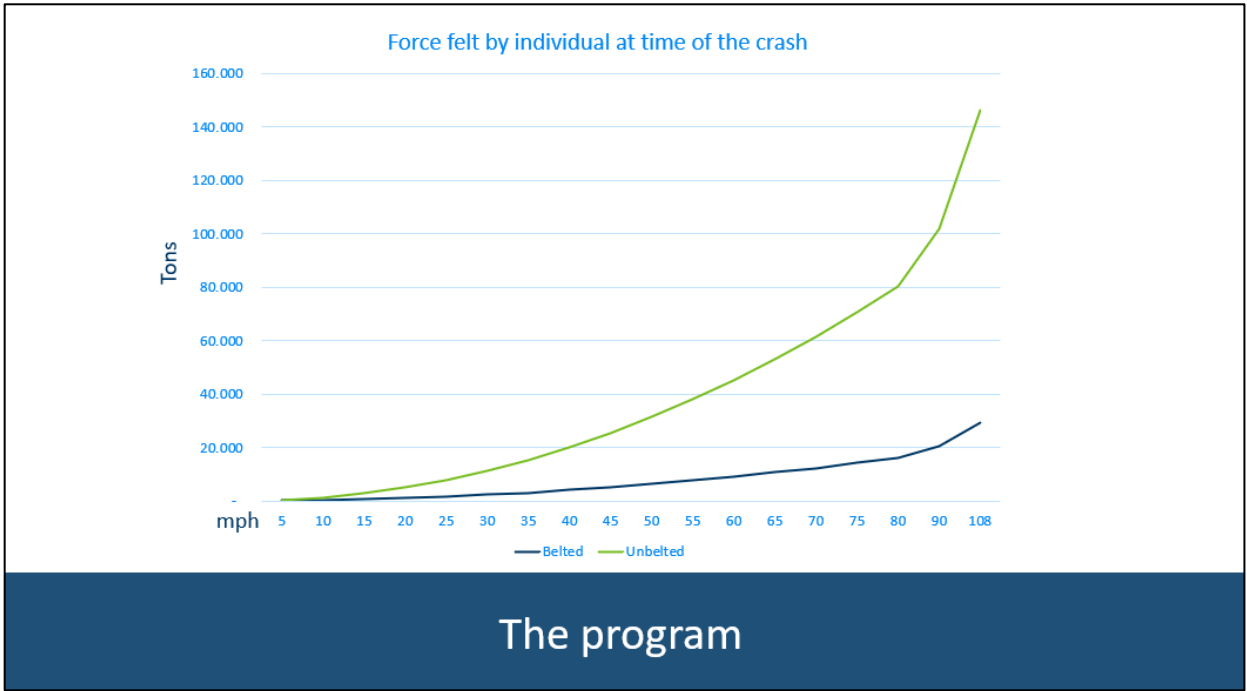
Example: When belted:

- Acceleration will slow, causing the top denominator to increase.
- This will happen over a fraction of a second which increases the lower denominator.
- Overall, this causes the entire equation to reduce. Therefore, the force is lower.





Next, the students are given the opportunity to experience the force of a crash. After experiencing the convincer, the force of a crash at a variety of speeds is calculated. A personal safety message and a brief overview of a variety of relevant careers fields, including first responders and engineering wraps up the presentation. The curriculum was presented at four high schools in the region.



## Regional ATV/UTV Highlights

- **Education and Public Engagement**

Jordan's ATV was displayed at community events across the region including two ATV Safety Trainings in Fillmore County, two Safe City Nights in Rochester, the Houston County Fair, the Rice County Fair, Mower County Fair, Passport to Agriculture in Rice County, the Red Wing Fire Department Open House, the Cannon Falls Fair, Austin National Night Out, and Prairie Island Indian Community Safety Day.



ATV safety education at the Pine Island High School Safety Fair included a student survey on helmet use and training requirements.

The Minnesota Safety Council and State Farm sponsored a *Do it For Them* banner for the trailer and safety messaging for the ATV to help engage and educate community members. See messages below.



In the fall of 2023, Jordan and his friend took off for a quick ATV ride that turned into a frightening experience when they crashed, leaving both injured but fortunately alive. Jordan, who has used ATVs for various outdoor activities throughout his life, took an unfamiliar corner of a gravel road too fast, which led the ATV into the ditch and collided with a tree. Worked with the Olmsted County Sheriff's office to develop an ATV safety video that highlighted [Jordan's Story](#). It has been viewed more than 8,000 times on social media. It is also played on a loop at events that display the ATV.

A graphic banner with a dark blue background and a white border. The text "Do it for THEM." is in large yellow letters, "Ride Safe." is in white, and "Your Driving Matters." is in white. To the right of the text are logos for "Drive SAFE Work SAFE Live SAFE", "MINNESOTA SAFETY COUNCIL Chapter of the National Safety Council", "TOWARD ZERO DEATHS SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA", and "State Farm".

• **Jordan's ATV Messaging**

**BE SMART - Wear a properly fitted helmet WITH eye protection**

- ALL Riders SHOULD Wear a Helmet
- Riders under 18 are REQUIRED to wear a DOT certified HELMET

**Ride Within Your Ability and for Conditions**

- ATVs are tough to control on rough terrain and can tip easily, especially on pavement
- When in doubt, **SLOW DOWN!**

ANYONE born after July 1, 1987, and who is 16 years or older, is required to complete the online ATV Safety Course.

SCAN FOR COURSE INFORMATION



**Pre-Ride Checklist:**




- ✓ Headlights
- ✓ Brake Lights
- ✓ Parking Brake

**One Size DOES NOT Fit All**

IS THE RIDER ABLE TO:

- Sit upright and reach the foot pegs?
- Grip and steer the handlebars fully?
- Control the throttle and brake with one hand?

- ✓ Check the **FUEL**
- ✓ Check the **OIL**

**Safety Gear Checklist:**



- ✓ Helmet
- ✓ Long Pants
- ✓ Eye Protection
- ✓ Long Sleeves
- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Boots

**When traversing a hill, lean into the hill.**

On sharp turns, **SLOW DOWN!**

What's a K turn and when would you use it?

Do it for ME. 

**NEVER Carry Passengers on single-rider ATV**

How old must you be to carry a passenger other than a parent or guardian?

**18 years +**

**Check Tire Pressure**

**Make sure wheel nuts are tight**



**KNOW THE LAWS**

- Current registration is REQUIRED
- Stay to the right
- Never trespass or ride on property without permission.
- Parents are responsible for illegal acts by children under 18.


**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:**

- ✓ Fully charged cell phone or SAT radio
- ✓ Water to stay hydrated
- ✓ Tow Rope
- ✓ First Aid Kit
- ✓ Tire Repair Kit



Two friends took this ATV for a quick ride on an unfamiliar gravel road without safety gear or training. The driver lost control at high speed, skidded down a steep embankment, and hit a tree.

Both suffered broken bones and cuts – one had to be airlifted. They're lucky to be alive.



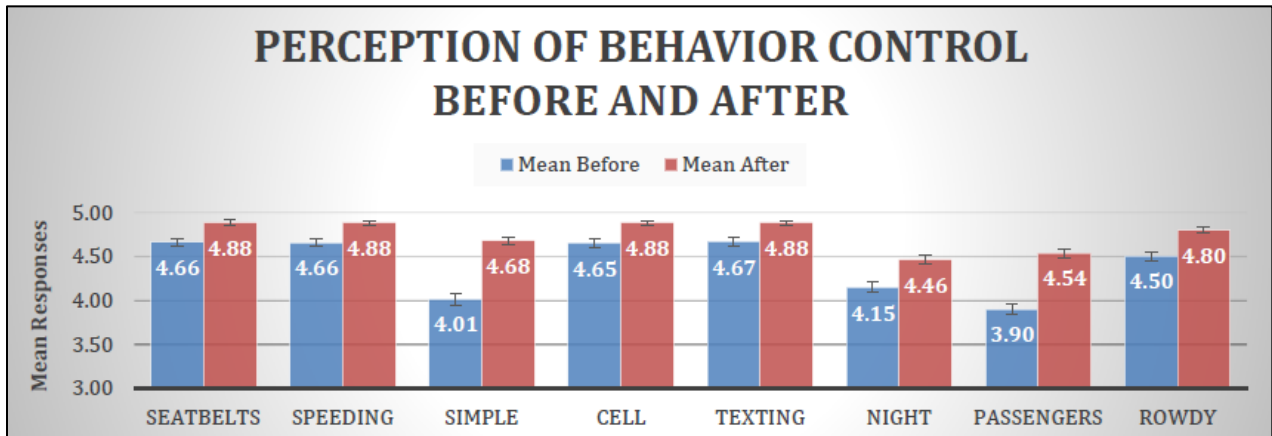
- **Impact Teen Driver**

Impact Teen Driver is a program that started in Minnesota in 2024. It focuses on educating 10<sup>th</sup> grade students on the dangers of distracted driving – but not just the common topics such as cell phone use. The program tackles the everyday distractions such as BFFs and lipstick, as well as the importance of being a good passenger, (with 50% of the younger driver fatalities being passengers, it makes sense to discuss



the importance of passengers making good decisions while in a vehicle) the dangers of impaired driving and speeding, and the importance of seat belt use. See below the statewide results of the pre- and post- survey evaluation. It shows a positive shift in self-reported behaviors, knowledge and skills related to safe driving. The hope is that this program will help drive traffic safety culture change throughout the state.

The program was implemented at Mabel-Canton High School and Rushford High School this year. Two State Patrol Troopers were trained fall 2025.



## Regional Impaired Driving Education Highlights

Impaired driving media coverage on pages 49-53.

- **“Know Your Limits” Voluntary Preliminary Breath Testing (PBT) Education**

Olmsted County, Goodhue County, Steele County

This educational event offers participants clear insight into how alcohol affects their bodies. They learn key concepts, including the rate at which their Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) changes, the impact beverages with higher content can have, and the critical fact that their BAC can continue to increase even *after* they stop drinking. For law enforcement, the event offers valuable hands-on training for newer officers and provides a unique opportunity for all officers to strengthen community relationships.

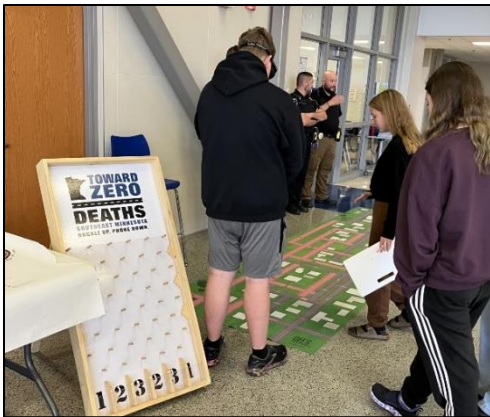
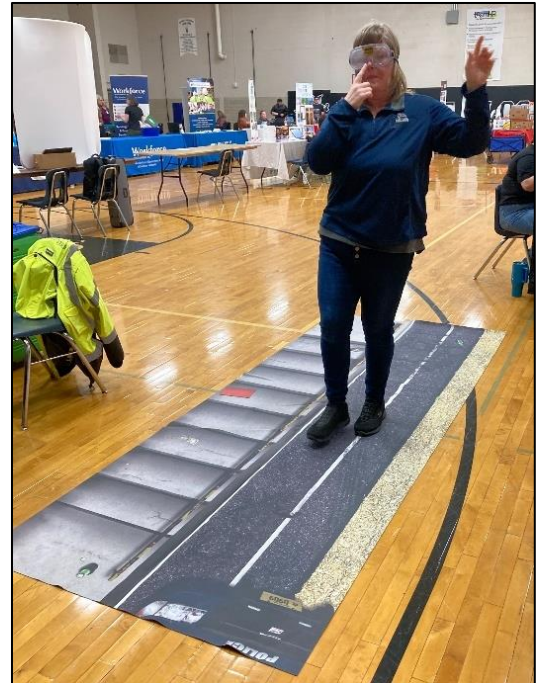
- Southeast TZD partnered with the Rochester Police Department to offer voluntary Preliminary Breath Testing (PBT) education to community members at *Thursdays Downtown* in Rochester.
- Goodhue County TZD partnered with the Goodhue County Sheriff's Office to offer voluntary PBT education at a local campground and liquor establishment. The campground event also included demonstrations and youth activities.
- Steele County held monthly Know Your Limits PBT education at Thursdays Downtown in Owatonna. "Walk the Line" with goggles holding a beer was popular with participants.



- ***Cannabis, Alcohol and Polydrug Impairment Education***

Students and staff had the opportunity to learn how cannabis, alcohol and a combination of both (polydrug use) affects the brain and the ability to drive safely. Students had hands-on experience using many of the activities included in the cannabis education kit, the alcohol education kit, and the polydrug education kit. Participating schools included Kasson-Mantorville High School, Goodhue High School, Medford High School, Plainview-Elgin-Millville High School, Blooming Prairie Forensic Science class, Faribault High School. The pedal cart was also used with cannabis goggles at high schools and community events including Wabasha's National Night Out.





- **Responsible Beverage Service Training**

There are currently 38 Responsible Beverage Service Training (RBST) trainers in the region. At least one training was held in almost every county across the region this year. The [Rice County Chemical & Mental Health Coalition](#) even offers the training on demand!

- **JOYRIDE – Rice County**

The Rice County TZD Safe Roads Coalition partnered with Defeat of Jesse James Days Committee, Northfield Police and College City Beverage to organize JOYRIDE for the Defeat of Jesse James Days. The FREE safe ride home shuttle service was available on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. within the city of Northfield. Tickets were available at the Defeat of Jesse James Entertainment Center and all liquor establishments.

- **Regional Impaired Driving Crash Car**

Coordinated the Impaired driving crash car calendar. The car was used at numerous festivals and high schools across the region to remind the community of the dangers of driving impaired.

Kaitlyn Hanson was a 16-year-old Fillmore Central student who was killed January 28, 2016, when an impaired driver crossed the center line and hit her vehicle head-on. Investigators determined that the driver had a blood alcohol concentration between .08 and .151 percent and was driving between 85-to-95 miles per hour when the crash happened. Her parents donated her vehicle in hopes of educating the public of the dangers of driving impaired. It was displayed at the Safe Summer Kickoff in Faribault, Dodge County Fair, Kasson-Mantorville High School Homecoming parade, Faribault High School, Zumbrota-Mazepa High School, and the Pine Island High School.

## Regional Speed Education

Speed-related media coverage on pages 52-54.

- **Annual Speed Poster**

Once a year, regional traffic safety stakeholders come together to create a regional photo to use to promote traffic safety in their communities. Over the years, the group has expanded beyond traditional partners to include other key players, such as ambulance crews and snowplow operators to visually demonstrate the unified Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) approach. The primary value of this long-standing tradition is its ability to build stronger relationships and partnerships among



all the participating agencies. In previous years, the event has been held in Lanesboro, Northfield, Owatonna, Red Wing, Rochester, Winona, Kasson, Lake City, Albert Lea, Austin, Rochester, Owatonna, Winona, Zumbrota, Mantorville, Preston and most recently in Faribault. More than 300 Speed posters were developed and distributed across the region. The Olmsted County Sheriff's Office developed a video for social media focused on the [Annual Southeast Minnesota TZD Seat Belt Kickoff](#) that has had nearly 6,000 views.



**Buckle up • Phone down • Drive sober • Slow down**

**Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths  
Seat Belt Enforcement Campaign Kickoff**

Rice County Public Safety Center • Faribault, Minnesota • May 2025



***Rice County Law Enforcement Center, Faribault, MN***

- **Border-to-Border Speed Saturation**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Border-to-Border multiagency Speed saturation was coordinated along Highway 14, 19 and 60 through five southeast counties on July 3, 2025. Southeast TZD partnered with the Southern Minnesota Law Enforcement Liaison and local law enforcement to incorporate regional educational outreach. A media advisory with information regarding the saturation was distributed prior to the event as well as a news release following the event. Electronic messaging boards were deployed displaying the enforcement message.

Kyle Bratt, Olmsted County Sheriff’s Office Media Development Specialist, posted a [#Headsup](#) announcement on social media and reported over 420,000 views, 2,000+ total interactions, 536 shares and 424 comments



**Results of the Multiagency Speed Enforcement Saturation**

Traffic Stops – 882 (645 in 2023 / 677 in 2024)  
 Speed Citations – 240 (163 in 2023 / 252 in 2024)  
 Speed Warnings – 451 (379 in 2023 / 394 in 2024)  
 Speeds at 100 plus – 5 (1 in 2023 / 3 in 2024)

**Stats by Region:**

Region	Stops	Speed Citations	Speed Warnings
SE Minnesota	274 / 440	131 / 119	152 / 261
SC Minnesota	212 / 165	67 / 49	106 / 87
SW Minnesota	141 / 246	33 / 72	107 / 103

**Participating SE Law Enforcement Agencies:**

MSP D2100 Rochester, Northfield Police Department, Red Wing Police Department, Rice County Sheriff’s Office, Lonsdale Police Department, Zumbrota Police Department, Dodge County Sheriff’s Office, Owatonna Police Department, Faribault Police Department, Olmsted County Sheriff’s Office, Steele County Sheriff’s Office, Kasson Police Department, Rochester Police Department, Goodhue County Sheriff’s Office, Kenyon Police Department and Preston Police Department.

- **B2B Electronic Message Boards**



## Regional Motorcycle Safety Education

- **Motorcycle Safety – Lisa’s Survivor Story – Do it For Them.**

Worked with the Olmsted County Sheriff’s Office to create a social media video focused on the importance of wearing safety gear. [Lisa’s Survivor Story](#) tells the story of a typical ride that turned into a fight for her life. Her husband watched helplessly as she crashed on the interstate. The outcome would have been much different had she not been wearing her safety gear.



- Motorcycle Safety – Spring and Fall Flood Run**

The Flood Run is a highly anticipated, three-day motorcycle event held twice annually (spring and fall) in Minnesota. Thousands of riders participate in the scenic journey that typically follows the Great River Road along the Mississippi River. Beyond the camaraderie and beautiful scenery, the event is a great time to remind all motorists to watch for motorcycles and share the road due to the increase in traffic in the area. MnDOT District 6 deployed changeable message boards at the start of the “Flood Run” motorcycle route as a reminder for all drivers to stay alert, share the road and use caution. The messages were deployed in April and September in Zumbro Falls.



- Motorcycle Safety - Social Media Highlights**



## Region Goal 2 – TZD Partnership Goals

To continuously increase TZD awareness and partnerships across southeast Minnesota for both the public and traffic safety professionals.

### Building Relationships within the Region

Relationships continue to be reinforced and formed through participation in quarterly Steering Committee meetings, regional activities and the annual Southeast Minnesota TZD annual workshop.



### Building Relationships – TZD Website

Efforts were made to ensure that all Southeast Minnesota TZD workshop materials, presentations, crash maps and media stories were updated on the TZD website.



### Building Relationships – Southeast Minnesota TZD end-of-year report

In addition to creating the end-of-year report for grant purposes, the regional report is also distributed to all the district's state and federal legislators in the MnDOT District 6 Legislative Report. The District Engineer meets annually with all legislators and the TZD report is included in this discussion and booklet. The end-of-year report is also posted online and distributed to the Southeast Minnesota Steering Committee.

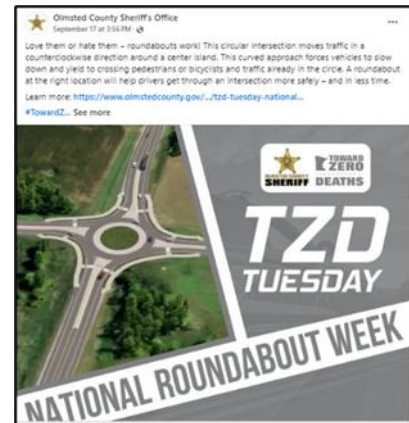
### Building internal and external relationships:

- Mentored the new regional TZD Safe Roads Coordinators by leading monthly in-person meetings to align work plans and develop regional projects. Created customizable materials for high school prom and graduation safety campaigns that coordinators can use in their communities.
- Participated in TZD enforcement award presentations as able.
- Participated in the Tribal Traffic Safety Summit.
- Participated in the quarterly TZD Hotdish.
- Participated in Safe Roads Peer exchange.
- Quarterly Steering Committee meetings.
- Participated in regional quarterly Fatal and Serious Crash Injury Review committees.
- Facilitated Mower County TZD Safe Roads and Fatal and Serious Crash Injury review meetings.
- Participation in quarterly regional TZD Safe Roads coalition meetings.
- Participated in Southern Minnesota Regional Trauma Advisory (SMRTAC) meetings when possible.
- Continued to participate in the statewide Motorcycle Task Force.
- Continued to participate in the MN Child Passenger Safety Advisory Task Force as able.



## Region Goal 2 – TZD Partnership Goals *Engineering*

Low cost, high benefit engineering safety improvements continue on both state and local roadways. The district and each county are implementing safety plans to further reduce crashes. Although many factors affect traffic-related fatalities including the economy, driver behavior and weather the fact remains that many traffic safety professionals continue to look at proactive and systematic ways to reduce fatalities and serious injuries due to crashes.



County engineers continue to implement safety projects that were identified in the county highway safety plans. District 6 county engineers are collaborating and applying for Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grants together to make roadway improvements proactively and systematically. The direction was to identify low cost, high benefit safety initiatives, e.g. rumble strips/rumble stripes, curve delineation, improved edge lines, intersection lighting and intersection signing improvements on the county system.

Picture above is the newest roundabout in the district. It is located at TH 58/CSAH 9.

### Building Internal and External Relationships – Engineering

- Participation by the Goodhue County Safe Roads Coordinator in the annual Prairie Island Safety Day at the Prairie Island Indian Community.
- Participated in and presented at the Local Roads Traffic Safety Workshops in Rochester on September 5 and in Faribault on August 7. The workshops were focused on facilitating conversations that focus on reducing fatal and serious injury crashes on the roadway systems. The workshops included participants from state, city and county agencies.
- Participated in the Olmsted County (ROCOG) Safe Streets for All (SS4A) action plan development process.
- Partnered with the MnDOT Public Engagement team to highlight construction projects and the importance of safety at the Mower County Fair.
- Participated in the Rice County Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Coalition. This state-led coalition brings together 4E agencies from across Rice and Steele County. The purpose of this meeting is to review planned construction on I-35, detours, and incident management. There is talk about expanding this effort to other areas of the region. Rice County was the first region in the state to form an active TIM coalition.
- Participated in the MnDOT Bike+ Planning Committee.
- Participated in the High Priority Pedestrian Safety Improvement Planning work group.



- Worked with county engineers to determine locations for driver feedback signs.
- Worked with county engineers to establish new locations for the new TZD replacement signs.
- Served as a resource to all city, county and state engineers as requested.



# MINNESOTA TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

Oct. 30, [2024](#)

Contact: Kristine Hernandez  
State TZD Communications  
[Kristine.Hernandez@state.mn.us](mailto:Kristine.Hernandez@state.mn.us)

## Kathy Cooper receives top safety award at the 24th annual Toward Zero Deaths conference

*The statewide awards are presented to those who work to save lives on Minnesota roadways*

**St. Cloud, Minn.** – Six people and one radio station were honored recently for their outstanding work to reduce the number of life-changing crashes on Minnesota roads. Each of the seven received a [2024 Toward Zero Deaths Award](#) during a ceremony attended by more than 800 of the state's leading traffic safety professionals meeting in St. Cloud for Minnesota's 24th annual State TZD conference.

The prestigious traffic safety awards are presented annually by the Minnesota departments of health, public safety and transportation. The awards recognize outstanding work and accomplishments to improve traffic safety and reduce the number of people who are killed or seriously injured while traveling Minnesota roads.

### **TZD's top honor goes to Kathy Cooper, Rice County TZD Coalition**

Kathy Cooper of Kenyon, and formerly of Aitkin, received TZD's top honor – the Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award. Cooper's 25 years of tireless work to save lives on Minnesota roads began after the tragic death of her 15-year-old daughter, Meghan, who was an unbelted passenger killed in an impaired-driver crash on June 9, 1999. Cooper's advocacy played a pivotal role in passing Minnesota's primary seat belt law which took effect on June 9, 2009, in honor of Meghan.

"I was so impressed when [Kathy] took responsibility for fighting for the primary seatbelt law that would include mandating seatbelts for those in the back seat. Her daughter would probably have lived if she was wearing a belt," said Nancy Johnson, Minnesotans for Safe Driving. "But it wasn't the law and Meghan was a teenager at the time. Kathy would walk around the Capital wearing a seatbelt and probably visited every legislator. I really believe that if it wasn't for her, the primary seatbelt law would not have passed at that time. She was invited to be at the signing of the bill," Johnson said.

Cooper also helped establish Rice County's TZD Safe Roads Coalition and Rice County's JOYRIDE sober cab program. She assists with coordinating mock crashes and safety fairs at high schools and has partnered with law enforcement on multiple traffic safety education efforts, including





# MINNESOTA TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

the Rice County Fair. Her years of exceptional leadership and accomplishments have improved traffic safety in southeast Minnesota and throughout the state.

"Kathy is often called upon to provide insight and guidance to other coalition coordinators across the state, due to her extensive knowledge and expertise in setting up new traffic safety programs and outreach events," said Jessica Schleck, southeast Minnesota TZD regional coordinator.

### **About TZD awards**

The [Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award](#) recognizes an individual who has shown exceptional leadership in efforts to improve traffic safety in Minnesota, build partnerships, and mentor others in the field. This individual will also have demonstrated a long-term passion, dedication, and commitment to reducing the number of deaths and injuries resulting from crashes on Minnesota roads.

TZD awards are presented annually to individuals and organizations in Minnesota that show excellence in TZD's emphasis areas of enforcement, emergency medical and trauma services, education, engineering, child passenger safety and judicial/court systems. Award recipients have shown their leadership and creative capacities in efforts to improve traffic safety throughout the state and build partnerships.

Toward Zero Deaths is Minnesota's core traffic safety program. The Minnesota TZD program is an interdisciplinary partnership led by the state departments of health, transportation and public safety. This collaboration began in 2003 and has worked to reduce roadway fatalities by 33 percent.

A primary vision of the TZD program is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe driving behavior. TZD focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes: education, enforcement, engineering and emergency medical and trauma response. Learn more about TZD and how to get involved at [www.minnesotatzd.org](http://www.minnesotatzd.org).

###

*For more information, please contact Kristine Hernandez at [kristine.hernandez@state.mn.us](mailto:kristine.hernandez@state.mn.us).*





# MINNESOTA TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths

---

## Media Advisory

May 5, 2025

**Contact:** Kristine Hernandez  
TZD Marketing & Communications  
507.273.0677; [kristine.hernandez@state.mn.us](mailto:kristine.hernandez@state.mn.us)

*For Immediate Release*

### **Southeast Minnesota’s Toward Zero Deaths workshop convenes in Rochester**

*Toward Zero Deaths focuses on zero fatalities and reducing serious injuries on our roads*

**What:** Even one traffic death is too many. Southeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) workshop partners discuss ways they can work together to reduce traffic deaths and serious injuries on Minnesota roads.

**When:** Wednesday, May 7, 2025, 8:30 a.m.–3 p.m.

**Where:** Rochester Event Center, 7333 Airport View Drive SW, Rochester, Minn.

**Why:** Since TZD started in 2003, traffic-related deaths have declined by 27 percent through 2024. Working together on traffic safety efforts is crucial to drive road fatalities to zero. Changing our traffic safety culture and dangerous driving behaviors is key to keeping everyone safe on our roads.

**Who:** Nearly 180 regional traffic safety stakeholders will attend the Southeast Minnesota regional TZD workshop, representing law enforcement, engineering, education, emergency medical and trauma services as well as local leaders. *Hosted by Minnesota Departments of Public Safety, Health and Transportation.*

#### Highlights

**11:15 a.m. Exploring the Impacts of Mental Health on our Roadways** – Nationally, 45 percent of repeat DWI offenders have a mental health disorder and more could be done to address this issue. Hear from the panelists about what is happening and what can be done.

#### **1:45 p.m. Innovative Strategies that can be used to Address Traffic Safety Issues in Your Community:**

- **What’s the Buzz Around DOSCI Older Driver Screeing?** — *Dr. Joanie Somes* will discuss what these screenings assess, the role of occupational therapists and driving rehabilitation specialists, and smart solutions to ensure road safety for all.
- **Fungus Amongus** – As cannabis legalization expands in Minnesota, mind and mood-altering products are following. This session will take you on a magical trip to explore the impact of microdosing fungi on traffic safety and potential strategies to address the fungus amongus.

Full agenda at: <https://www.minnesotatzd.org/events/workshop/southeast/2025>

###



# Statewide TZD Conference Coverage

Aitkin Independent

12.11.2024

## Rice County TZD Coordinator Receives the Kathy Swanson Award

By: Kat Robb

AITKIN INDEPENDENT AGE

**TZD/**From page A1  
1987. "We moved to Kenyon after the birth of our second daughter," she said.

### MEGHAN

The following was taken from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

When Kathy Cooper realized her 15-year-old daughter, Meghan, wasn't wearing her seat belt, she pulled off of Hwy. 56 and insisted Meghan put it on. It was the spring of 1999 and they were headed to Rochester to shop for prom. Meghan complied, but she wasn't pleased. "Mom, you're so dumb. It's not even the law!"

Sadly, Meghan was right. Weeks later, on June 9, 1999, she was killed when she was ejected from the back seat of a car in a crash. She wasn't wearing her seat belt. **SAFETY CRUSADE**

Cooper explained that after Meghan's death, her Kenyon-Wanamingo classmates went to the school board and asked to start a SADD Chapter. "They made and sold 'Buckle Up 4 Meghan' buttons to fund their activities," said Cooper. "They were my life-line and we supported each other. They really started the 'Buckle Up 4 Meghan' campaign." Cooper immersed herself, learning as much as she could about seat belts. "I was shocked to learn that Minnesota's law only required you to wear a seat belt in the back seat till age 11. Meghan was sitting in the back seat of the car in the crash and ejected out the rear window. It soon became a mission for all of us that we would change the law so everyone in the vehicle was required to wear a seat belt." Cooper went back to Meghan's classmates. "They did incredible things as they entered 10th grade and struggled to deal with Meghan's death. They even went to the capitol for Buckle Up Day with the governor and two years later hosted the governor at the school in Kenyon for a buckle up assembly. I am so proud of all they did."

Soon Cooper was contacting legislators and spending time at the capitol testifying in committee hearings to update Minnesota's seat belt law. "Every year I picked up where I left off and continued to visit legislators and find new supporters," she said. "The

Minnesota Safety Council adopted me and I worked with them to educate not only the public but the legislators on the life-saving aspect of an upgrade to Minnesota's law."

In 2007 Cooper was hired by Northfield's Healthy Community Initiative to be the coordinator for the Rice County Safe Roads Coalition which was grant funded by the state of Minnesota. The TZD or Toward Zero Deaths program is a statewide program that started in 2003 in Minnesota, the first state to adopt the program.

### TZD

Toward Zero Deaths is Minnesota's core traffic safety program. The Minnesota TZD program is an interdisciplinary partnership led by the state departments of health, transportation and public safety. This collaboration began in 2003 and has worked to reduce roadway fatalities by 33%.

A primary vision of the TZD program is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe driving behavior. TZD focuses on the application of four strategic areas, known as the four "Es" to reduce crashes: education, enforcement, engineering and emergency medical and trauma response.

"There are approximately 30 coalitions throughout the state working to educate the public about the importance of traffic safety," said Cooper. "They work in the schools and with the public to stress the importance of wearing your seat belt, not using your cell phone when driving, never drive impaired by alcohol or drugs and obey speed limits."

Six people and one radio station were honored recently for their outstanding work to reduce the number of life-changing crashes on Minnesota roads.

The traffic safety awards are presented annually by the Minnesota departments of health, public safety and transportation. The awards recognize outstanding work and accomplishments to improve traffic safety and reduce the number of people who are killed or seriously injured while



Kathy Cooper recently received TZD's top honor — the Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award. Cooper has spent 25 years of tireless work to save lives on Minnesota roads.

traveling Minnesota roads.

Cooper received the Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award for her 25 years of tireless work to save lives on Minnesota roads. Cooper's advocacy played a pivotal role in passing Minnesota's primary seat belt law which took effect on June 9, 2009 (the 10th anniversary of Meghan's death), in honor of Meghan. The award recognizes an individual who has shown exceptional leadership in efforts to improve traffic safety in Minnesota, build partnerships and mentor others in the field. This individual will also have demonstrated a long-term passion, dedication and commitment to reducing the number of deaths and injuries.

"I was so impressed when Cooper took responsibility for fighting for the primary seat belt law that would include mandating seat belts for those in the back seat. Her daughter would probably have lived if she was wearing a belt," said Nancy Johnson, Minnesotans for Safe Driving. "I really believe that if it wasn't for her, the primary seat belt law would not have passed at that time. She was invited to be at the signing of the bill," Johnson said.

Cooper also helped establish Rice County's TZD Safe Roads Coalition and Rice County's JOYRIDE sober cab program. She assists with coordinating mock crashes and safety fairs at high schools and has partnered with law enforcement on multiple traffic safety education efforts, including the Rice County Fair.

"Kathy is often called upon to provide insight and guidance to other coalition coordinators across the state, due to her extensive

knowledge and expertise in setting up new traffic safety programs and outreach events," said Jessica Schleck, southeast Minnesota TZD regional coordinator.

Learn more at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ots/partner-information/traffic-safety-grants/tzd-safe-roads-program>. Learn more about TZD and how to get involved at [www.minnesotatzd.org](http://www.minnesotatzd.org).

### AITKIN COUNTY TZD

Aitkin County Toward Zero Death Program is a collaboration of EMS, law enforcement, engineers, prosecution, government officials, public health and other volunteers, such as towing.

### Upcoming Event

On Friday, Dec. 13 from 1-4 p.m., the Aitkin County Coalition and the Enforcement TZD will be doing a Safe and Sober radio show on the local radio at the 40 Club Restaurant and Bar in Aitkin.

The Aitkin County TZD Coalition consists of: Aitkin Police, Aitkin County Commissioner, Aitkin County Public Health, Aitkin County Engineer, Hill City Police Department, Aitkin County Attorney's Office, ASAP Towing, Minnesota State Patrol, Aitkin County Sheriff's Office, Office of Traffic Safety — TZD Coordinator, Office of Traffic Safety Law Enforcement Liaison, *Aitkin Independent Age*, North Memorial, Life Link, MN ATV and anyone else who has a passion for traffic safety.

"We meet once a month,

to collaborate and discuss education opportunities for the public and the prevention of serious injury crashes and fatalities on our roadways in Aitkin County," said group Coordinator Amy Dotzler.

Some of the recent events held by the local coalition include: education enforcement speed zones in Aitkin, representation at the Aitkin High School Health Fair, Aitkin County Fair and the Hill City 4th of July celebration with the "seat belt convincer," the Aitkin Fire Hall open house and the Aitkin High School Career Fair with the impaired and distracted driving simulator.

"Both of these tools are purchased and maintained by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, but lent to local coalitions for educational purposes," explained Dotzler.

A mock crash at the McGregor High School was held last spring. The theme was impaired driving with a fellow student being the driver and another being fatally injured. After the mock crash, the Minnesota State Patrol gave a presentation to the ninth through 12th grade students called the "Lasting Impact," a family's story of losing their senior in high school to a preventable crash.

Dotzler said that this year the coalition has been funded by the state for additional outreach including, "Speaking at the various levels of government, county board, city boards and conducting Responsible Beverage Server Training," said Dotzler. "We also plan to coordinate a mock crash in Hill City for the spring of 2025 and plan to be back in Aitkin for the mock crash in spring of 2026. We will continue the rotation to get the education and impact to each of the high schools in our county. We also have the radio public service announcements we have added to our local radio stations with safe driving reminders."

Aside from the coalition, the Aitkin and Hill City police departments and Aitkin County Sheriff's Office are grant recipients of the enforcement side of the TZD effort. "This allows extra patrol on our roadways for specific focus, such as impaired driving, distracted driving, seat belt/child safety seat and speed

enforcement," explained Dotzler. "The saturation schedule is based on the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety's events calendar. We have been fortunate to receive this enforcement grant for the last four years. This tid-bit also explains why you often see a different agency patrolling in different areas throughout the county."

Dotzler explained what a typical TZD meeting looks like, "After the normal coalition meeting we have a fatal review board that will review recent fatal or serious injury crashes. This allows open discussion between key stakeholders to identify areas of improvement for future similar incidents. Some examples of what comes from the fatal reviews are suggestions for — new or additional signage on roadways, rumble strips for upcoming stop, roadway improvement, responder response, etc."

On Dec. 3, the local group hosted the northeast regional roundtable meeting, bringing all of the northeast region: Koochiching, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Itasca, Carlton, Pine and Aitkin to collaborate together and discuss each coalition's efforts.

On Friday, Dec. 13 from 1-4 p.m., the Aitkin County Coalition and the Enforcement TZD will be doing a Safe and Sober radio show on the local radio at the 40 Club Restaurant and Bar in Aitkin. "This is an opportunity to educate the public on the effects of alcohol and on the tests the law enforcement officers perform in the event of a suspected impaired driving situation," said Dotzler. "The officers will be available for questions and comments throughout the event. This education is aligned with the impaired driving campaign that runs every Thursday through Saturday for the month of December."

Anyone with an interest in traffic safety and would like to join the committee or see what it is about, contact Dotzler at the Aitkin Police Department at 218-927-2133 or email [adotzler@aitkinpolice.com](mailto:adotzler@aitkinpolice.com). Those interested can also follow the Aitkin County TZD Facebook page.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2024 | A21

## Motorcycle Media Coverage

KIMT-TV

10.21.24

### [There's been an uptick in motorcycle crashes recently with the warmer weather | News | kimt.com](#)

*By: Maureen Dudley*

ROCHESTER, Minn.-With the warmer weather, more riders have been out on Minnesota roadways. Despite the safety precautions in place, there has been an uptick in motorcycle crashes as well. In the past year there have been 71 motorcycle involved crashes. That's about 10% more than this time last year (64 crashes in 2023 by October 21st).

Minnesota State Patrol Sergeant Troy Christianson said, "A lot of them are just one single vehicle crashes where the motorcycles are going off the road but some of them are hard to determine why they happen so that's what takes a while for the investigation is trying to determine if a deer or something did come out and that's why they swerved."

Most crashes happen because of inexperienced riders or hazards. New riders aren't the only ones at risk, older and more experienced drivers can get into an accident as well.

Eagle Wings Motorcycle Association founder Bruce Beeman said, "It's really important that you ride to your ability and ride to what you know is safe for you and not to try to ride somebody else's ride because you're going to get hurt."

Beeman has been riding for years and acknowledged how he used to ride without a helmet because it was cool. Once he started riding with a group that wore helmets all the time however, he tried it and never went back.

"The reason I put a helmet on was to see what they were saying about me. They weren't saying anything but I got used to wearing a helmet. I've been down once on a motorcycle and I'm glad I had a helmet on because my head bounced off the pavement and I didn't get hurt," Beeman said.

Beyond wearing a helmet, riders also need to wear other protective gear to stay safe while riding.

Sergeant Christianson said, "Unlike vehicles, you know motorcycles you don't have anything around you to protect you, you don't have the airbags and just the room and space so that's why it's important to wear all the safety gear at all times and just make sure you're driving the speed limit and just be a very defensive rider."

With motorcyclists needing to be defensive while they drive, there's more than one way for drivers to help keep them safe.

Beeman said, "One of the best habits that people can get into is having your kids count the number of motorcycles that they see and the reason I say that is because when that child becomes an adult and now, they're behind the wheel of a car they're automatically looking for that motorcycle."

With more motorcyclists on the road for half the year in Minnesota, getting in groups and riding together is part of the fun but it also needs to stay safe.

"The thing to keep in mind is that each rider needs to ride their own ride don't try to ride somebody else's ride. What I mean by that is my ability to ride a motorcycle may be more superior than what your ability to ride a motorcycle is so when you try to keep up with me, you're putting your life in danger and anybody behind you's life in danger.

**KTTC-TV**  
**10.23.24**

## **Motorcycle crashes on the rise with warmer temperatures**

By: [Aaliyah Demry](#)

ROCHESTER, Minn. (KTTC)—As warmer weather inches away, motorcycle riders are squeezing in their last rides, and with that, there has been a rise in motorcycle crashes in Southeast Minnesota.

The Minnesota State Patrol reported 71 motorcycle accidents this year, compared to 62 last year in Southeast Minnesota.

According to the state patrol, 80% of motorcycle crashes in Minnesota are single-vehicle incidents.

The week of October 14th troopers investigated six motorcycle accidents; one was fatal.

The state patrol reminds riders to be aware of the speed limit, always wear safety gear, and be mindful of animals crossing the road.

“This time of the year, with farmers busy in the fields, animals are get pushed during different times of day and so you’ll see deer more active on the roadways, and that’s when we’ll see these increases in these types of crash,” said Sargent Troy Christianson with the Minnesota State Patrol.

As the temperatures start to drop, the state patrol also advises riders not to drive in the upcoming winter months because of the chemicals, sand, and salt on the roads that can be dangerous for the bikes and riders.

**KTTC-TV**  
**3.27.25**

## **MN State Patrol share Spring motorcycle safety tips**

By [Aaliyah Demry](#)

ROCHESTER, Minn. (KTTC) – As the weather continues warming up, a reminder that more motorcyclists will be on our roads. Officials want to make sure they are safe while riding.

We are only three months into the year, and there have already been four statewide motorcycle fatalities reported compared to just one last year in March.

Alcohol or drug consumption can often be a key factor in motorcycle-involved accidents.

According to the Minnesota State Patrol, about one-third of all motorcyclists killed in crashes have alcohol in their systems.

Sgt. Troy Christianson expressed that some riders are making the mistake of getting out on the roads too early in the season.

With some of the uncertain weather conditions we've been experiencing, Christianson said that motorcyclists should drive at appropriate speeds according to the weather.

"When we have nice weather, we're going to see motorcycles out and about. So, it's important when we start to have consistently nice weather or nice days that other motorists are watching for motorcycles," he said.

Christianson suggests that riders wait for roadways to be completely cleared of debris, sand, and snow.

He also urges motorcyclists to be on constant alert for road hazards.

"Just make sure you are looking at intersections and double looking...Half of our crashes involve other vehicles with motorcycles." Christianson explained.

Riders should drive according to their experience level. If you are not comfortable going fast, it's okay to slow down or avoid highways.

Be sure to wear important safety gear, such as a DOT-approved helmet, a good jacket, gloves, pants, and boots.

[Click here](#) to learn more motorcycle safety tips.

---

## Seat Belt Media Coverage:

**KTTC-TV**  
**05.20.25**

[Law enforcement enforcing extra patrol to ensure drivers and passengers are wearing seatbelts](#)

By [Aaliyah Demry](#)

ROCHESTER, Minn. (KTTC) – It's pretty simple: click it or receive a ticket. We all know buckling up on the roads can save your life.

From May 19 through June 1, a Minnesota campaign is pushing extra enforcement on the roads to ensure everyone is wearing their seatbelts.

With this campaign, the state is hoping to protect drivers but also hold people accountable for not following the law.

Minnesota State Patrol Sergeant Troy Christianson said we are headed into the 100 deadliest days of the year, with folks traveling more for Memorial Day through Labor Day.

According to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, most Minnesotans are wearing seatbelts. The percentage of people wearing one in 2024 was near an all-time high at 94.7%. That's the highest since 2013.

On the other hand, people not wearing seatbelts make up a large number of traffic fatalities. In 2024, there were 476 traffic deaths, and 106 of those were not wearing seatbelts.

If you are a driver, remember it's your responsibility to make sure everyone is wearing a seatbelt in your vehicle. Tight across the hips or thighs, and never under the arm or behind the back, including children.

Between 2019 and 2024, 68% of children ages zero to nine were known to \*not be properly secured. 87% of children who \*were properly secured were not hurt in crashes, and about 12% sustained minor injuries.

Officials say children should always be in the proper car seat, depending on their age.

Law enforcement can stop and give a fine of \$140 for unbelted drivers and passengers.

---

## Impaired Driving Media Coverage

**KIMT-TV**  
**10.31.24**

[Minnesota State Patrol says drivers should plan ahead when heading to Halloween parties | News | kimt.com](#)

*By: Evan Berg*

ROCHESTER, Minn.-Sgt. Troy Christianson with the Minnesota State Patrol says Halloween partygoers should plan ahead on how to get home if they're going to get intoxicated on Thursday, Oct. 31.

Sgt. Christianson says that State Patrol plans on having several additional patrols on the road until the end of the weekend to keep an eye out for impaired drivers.

"Halloween is a great time and its fun, but we want to make sure people plan ahead and have a designated driver or take advantage of some kind of ride share to get home safely," Christianson said.

According to Peter Bartz, owner of Safe Ridez, a designated driver service in Rochester, the Halloween season is one of the busier times of year for services like his and often involves all hands on deck.

Bartz says his service runs from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m., and is often booking a high volume of passengers all throughout the weekend.

"With the start of the holiday season there's going to be a lot of celebrating out there, the roads are going to be busy with people who are celebrating and people who are not celebrating and we just want to make sure everyone gets home," Bartz said.

With hundreds of trick or treaters out and about this year, the State Patrol and Rochester Police Department say it is important for drivers to also slow down and stay alert in neighborhoods and at busy intersections.

"Kids are unpredictable and you just never know, so it's important that motorists just reduce their speeds and pay attention," Sgt. Christianson said.

On the pedestrian side of things the State Patrol said that bright clothing can also be helpful for trick or treaters to make themselves known to drivers late at night.

Whatever you're doing to celebrate the Halloween season, Christianson said it's just important to plan ahead so everyone can have a great time and do it responsibly

**KTTC**

**01.01.25**

## **Law enforcement reminding everyone to stay safe during the New Year**

By [Matt Rineer](#)

ROCHESTER, Minn. (KTTC) – As millions get set to welcome in 2025, law enforcement agencies are reminding everyone to stay safe for the holiday.

Both the Rochester Police Department (RPD) and Minnesota State Patrol (MSP) said they have extra patrols out during the New Year's Eve celebration.

RPD said it sees an increase in call volume with most calls it responds to being alcohol related, with incidents like traffic accidents and physical violence being among the list.

"The biggest thing is ensuring that we dedicate enough time to persons that we come in contact with to ensure that they have a safe and uneventful evening, if that makes sense here, as we ring in 2025," RPD Lt. Ryan Lodermeier said.

Minnesota State Patrol Sergeant Troy Christianson said there have been 465 fatal crashes in the state this year, with alcohol playing a factor in nearly 24% of those crashes. He added how there is usually an increase in fatal and serious crashes during holidays like New Year's Eve.

"Some of it's because of the traffic volumes increased, but also, it's because people are consuming these products. So, it doesn't matter if you're consuming alcohol or the cannabis products, if you're impaired, you're impaired and it affects the way you drive," Christianson said.

State patrol added extra enforcement for impaired drivers since Thanksgiving. During these extra enforcement periods, more than 1,400 arrests were made statewide.

Both RPD and MSP recommend having a designated driver if you plan on celebrating with anything that could impair, your ability to drive.

---

## 100 Deadliest Days Coverage

**KIMT-TV**

**05.07.25**

### [Southeast Minnesota works toward zero deaths on Minnesota roadways | News | kimt.com](#)

*By: Maureen Dudley*

ROCHESTER, Minn.-As summer gets closer, the 100 deadliest days on Minnesota roads approaches. In 2024, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (MN DPS) said there were [479 traffic deaths](#) on Minnesota roadways. That number is more than the [402 deaths](#) in 2023.

The department looks at impaired driving, speeding, seatbelt use and distracted driving when it comes to crashes. So far in 2025, there have been 97 traffic deaths in Minnesota compared to the 125 that took place by this time in 2024.

Each summer, law enforcement is out patrolling the roadways looking for those driving under the influence.

MN DPS Office of Traffic Safety director Mike Hanson said, "What we are seeing is an alarming trend in what we refer to as multi-substance or poly-substance impaired driving arrest and basically what that means is somebody's not using just one chemical, they're using two or three or four or more."

He said that what's been most common is seeing cannabis and alcohol being mixed. MN DPS also said that roughly 95% of Minnesotans report wearing seatbelts while driving.

**KTTC**

**04.30.25**

### [Law enforcement to step up speeding enforcement until September](#)

*By Addie McCabe*

ROCHESTER, Minn. (KTTC) – Speeding is an ongoing threat to safety on Minnesota roads. To slow down drivers and save lives, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) said extra law enforcement will be out from May 1 through Sept. 2.

Officers, deputies and troopers from nearly 300 agencies statewide will be participating in the extra enforcement.

“It’s so frightening seeing a car come whizzing past your rear-view mirror. Everyone knows that speeding is wrong, and yet so many people still do it,” said Mike Hanson, director of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety’s Office of Traffic Safety (OTS).

*Drivers, take a moment, plan ahead and follow the speed limit. Trust me, you won’t get there faster if you’re in a fatal crash.*

*Mike Hanson, director of the Minnesota DPS OTS*

He is reminding drivers that speed is the one thing they have absolute control of every minute they are behind the wheel.

## MINNESOTA SPEEDING-RELATED DEATHS AND CITATIONS

So far in 2025, there have been at least 15 speed-related fatalities, and speeding continues to be one of the top contributing factors in fatal crashes year after year.

Year	# of Deaths
2024	137
2023	113
2022	130
2021	171
2020	122

Speed-related crashes can happen on any road at any time.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 87 percent of all speeding-related traffic fatalities occurred on non-interstate roadways in 2022.

The Minnesota State Patrol [provided data](#) on the number of related citations they’ve given in past years.

Year	Speeding	Seat Belt	Distracted I
2024	235,961	23,465	48,278
2023	242,291	27,103	46,267
2022	244,980	22,100	37,923

[RELATED: Law enforcement cracks down on distracted driving in April](#)

## 100 DEADLIEST DAYS

DPS says that Memorial Day through Labor Day are typically the most traveled days on Minnesota roads and nationwide.

These so-called “100 deadliest days” carry some of the largest fatal crash counts every year.

To push back against the rise in deadly driving and to try to save lives, law enforcement will be focusing on speeding, seat belt usage, impairment and distraction — the four behaviors that are the largest contributors to fatal crashes.

Col. Christina Bogojevic, Minnesota State Patrol chief, says Minnesota's troopers are always working to prevent traffic fatalities, but efforts are increased during this range of time specifically.

*Every year, we deliver heartbreaking news to families, and the 100 deadliest days remain a deeply challenging stretch. That's why we're focusing on enforcement and education to change behavior. Drivers, slow down. We want everyone getting home safely.*

*Col. Christina Bogojevic*

There were 151 fatalities in Minnesota between Memorial Day and Labor Day in 2024, according to DPS.

---

## **Distracted Driving Media Coverage**

**KIMT-TV**

**02.17.25**

[\*\*Olmsted County Sheriff's Office combats distracted driving | News | kimt.com\*\*](#)

By: *Emma Esteb*

ROCHESTER, Minn. - Distracted driving continues to be a concern on our roads, contributing to 29 deaths and 146 life-changing injuries in Minnesota last year.

To combat this issue, the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office received a traffic safety grant back in Aug. which they used to buy a specialized truck designed to detect distracted driving. The truck was used during its distracted driving wave in late Aug. and through Labor Day weekend.

The truck is specifically designed at a higher vantage point to see people on their phones while driving. The vehicle is part of the department's 'Towards Zero Death Program,' an effort to stop the culture of traffic fatalities by education, enforcement, engineering, and providing services.

It's a rising concern not just here in Minnesota, Iowa lawmakers are working towards a hands-free driving bill to combat the issue. Olmsted County says a more 'relaxed' attitude of drivers is contributing to these incidents.

Olmsted County Sheriff Kevin Torgerson says, "distracted driving is and has proven to be a danger and a risk and we need people to pay attention. When I am in my personal vehicle I pull up next to somebody in a car and yep, they are sitting there on their phone or still talking on their phone and stuff. I'm like what are we not doing to get these people's attention?"

The truck has videotaping features and officers also wear body cameras to pull people over for distracted driving. Other law enforcement agencies including Dodge and Mower County are also able to use the vehicle.

**KAAL-TV**

**03.27.25**

## [Cutting down on distracted driving - ABC 6 News - kaaltv.com](#)

*By: Jordan Sansom*

(ABC 6 News) – Drivers in Albert Lea will have to be more cautious as April is Distracted Drivers Awareness Month. Albert Lea Police and the Freeborn County Sheriff's Office received a grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety to help crack down on this issue.

"Minnesota is a hands-free state, so you cannot have your cell phone in your hands when you're driving the vehicle," Albert Lea Police Lieutenant Jeff Strom said.

In 2023, distracted driving contributed to 136 serious injuries and 33 deaths.

The Albert Lea police department is looking to put that grant money to good use.

"April is distracted driving awareness month so officers are out on overtime shifts, looking for distracted drivers throughout the month of April," Strom said.

This is for the statewide initiative, Towards Zero Deaths. It's to limit the number of fatalities on the road. Distracted means things like cell phone use, eating and drinking, or anything that causes you to take your eyes off the road.

Even if you use your phone at a red light, law enforcement says it's still a violation.

"Sometimes people will hold their phones, be at a stop sign and looking down and if they're on their cell phone that is a violation," Strom said. Those caught distracted driving will be subject to a \$100 fine for the first offense. Anything after that and the fine can go up to \$300.

"Our focus for the month will be stopping, educating, and even citing those who are on their cell phones or doing other forms of distracted driving," Albert Lea police officer Chris Diesen said.

As officers are prepping to stop people from driving while distracted, ask yourself is it worth it to send that text, or can you wait until you reach your destination.

At the end of the day, it's all about making it to your location safe and sound.

It's much easier to pull over than being involved in a crash that's going to cause someone to either be injured, killed, and that person might be you," Diesen said.

So when you're driving, put the phone down and if you really need to use it, pull over away from traffic. Officers say doing those little things can save lives.

**KAAL-TV**

**04.01.25**

## [Distracted Driving Campaign begins in Minnesota - ABC 6 News - kaaltv.com](#)

*By: Brandon Antony*

(ABC 6 News)- 29 deaths, and 137 serious injuries, all the result of distracted driving on Minnesota roads, and on Tuesday, the crackdown is officially on.

For the entire month of April, law enforcement in our area will be looking for drivers who are paying attention to just about anything other than the road.

“There is no excuse for driving distracted, nothing on your phone is worth a life,” said Colonel Christina Bogojevic of the Minnesota State Patrol.

It’s part of the state’s “Toward Zero Death’s program, and whether you know your breaking the law or aren’t familiar with what it is, getting pulled over for distracted driving will cost you.

“Getting caught will cost you. 100 dollars or more including court fees for a first offense, 300 dollars or more including courts fees for a second or subsequent offense,” said Bogojevic.

And keeping an eye out for squad car’s won’t even help, as deputies are using unmarked vehicles to help track offenders down.

“Being unmarked, it blends in with traffic a little more. This will be the second year we used that. We’ve had a lot of success with it last year,” said Deputy Sheriff Michael Reese, of the Olmsted County Sheriff’s Department.

Success that translates into fewer deaths, less accidents and educated drivers who some learn the hard way, that you need to put your phone down.

“We just want people to pay attention to the road. Don’t drive distracted whether that’s on your cell phone, your busy talking to your passenger. You have that dog in your lap, you’re eating food. Please let that main focus be on the road,” Reese said.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety said they have already issued 5,400 citations or warnings involving distracted driving so far this year, which is a 4 percent increase compared to last year at this time. They hope by having this campaign they can help that number decrease the rest of the year.

**KAAL-TV**

**03.28.25**

[Minnesota DPS announces campaign to crack down on distracted driving - ABC 6 News - kaaltv.com](https://www.kaaltv.com/news/minnesota-dps-announces-campaign-to-crack-down-on-distracted-driving-abc-6-news-kaaltv.com)

By: KAALTV

(ABC 6 News) — The Minnesota Department of Public Safety has announced a new campaign to crack down on distracted driving.

According to the DPS, last year 478 people died on Minnesota roads with 29 of those being in distracted driving related crashes.

The new campaign comes with new traffic safety vehicles that have cameras and equipment to document dangerous driving behaviors.

The distracted driving campaign runs through April.

## **KAAL-TV**

**05.11.25**

### [3,427 drivers cited for Distracted Driving during April Enforcement Campaign - ABC 6 News - kaaltv.com](#)

*By: KAALTV*

(ABC 6 News) – Law enforcement across Minnesota wrapped up a month-long distracted driving enforcement campaign aimed at educating drivers and stopping the dangerous behavior.

#### **Results April 1-30:**

- 3,427 drivers were cited for hands-free cell phone violations.
- 275 Minnesota agencies participated.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) coordinates the effort, which included extra enforcement, education and awareness to help influence drivers to pay attention and keep people safe on the road.

“It’s mind-blowing that this many people still don’t get it. Distractions are deadly, plain and simple,” OTS Director Mike Hanson said. “You have one job behind the wheel – and that’s driving. Not eating. Not scrolling through your phone. Not putting on makeup. Pay attention to the road and get yourself and your passengers home safe.”

In southeast Minnesota, agencies with the most citations included:

- Albert Lea Police Department 36
- Blooming Prairie Police Department 6
- Goodhue County Sheriff’s Office 16
- Kasson Police Department 21
- MN State Patrol - District 2100 (Rochester) 12
- Mower County Sheriff’s Office 4
- Olmsted County Sheriff’s Office 6
- Rochester Police Department 39
- Zumbrota Police Department 4

View the [full list](#) of participating agencies.

**Distracted Driving is Dangerous Driving**

- More than 32,000 crashes were distracted driving-related from 2018-2022, contributing to one in 11 crashes in Minnesota.
- In 2022, preliminary figures show distracted driving contributed to 126 injuries and 22 deaths.
- Distracted driving contributes to 9 percent of crashes in Minnesota.

Hands-free cell phone use became law on Aug. 1, 2019, in Minnesota. The law allows a driver to use their cell phone to make calls, text, listen to music or podcasts and get directions, but only by voice commands or single-touch activation without holding the phone.

Video calling, streaming videos, accessing social media or using the internet are all still against the law in Minnesota, even in hands-free mode. Visit [HandsFreeMN.org](https://www.handsfreemn.org) and [DriveSmartMN.org](https://www.drivesmartmn.org) for more information about the law.

**KAAL-TV**  
**04.01.25**

[More patrols on the roads this April | News | kimt.com](https://www.kimt.com/news/more-patrols-on-the-roads-this-april)

*By: Maureen Dudley*

ROCHESTER, Minn.-You know those drivers that are looking down at their phone are distracted. This month, law enforcement is looking to crack down on distracted drivers.

April is Distracted Driving month and law enforcement wants to keep the community safe through extra patrols and education. Minnesota has a strict hands-free law forbidding drivers from holding a phone while driving.

According to the Minnesota State Patrol, 48,278 drivers were ticketed for driving distracted on the road in 2024. State Patrol also stated that in 2024 distracted driving contributed to at least 29 fatal crashes and around 137 serious injuries in Minnesota.

So far in 2025, Minnesota State Patrol states that 7,154 citations or warnings involved distracted driving. Common distractions, according to State Patrol, can include eating, putting on makeup or shaving, and watching videos on your phone.

Minnesota State Patrol Sergeant Troy Christianson said, "We prefer you do nothing but focus on driving. Of course, people are going to multitask, but when you're multitasking then you kind of take off the primary focus of paying attention to what's going on the roadway and also the other vehicles around you."

Penalties for distracted driving start at \$100 or more in fines for the first offense, \$300 or more for a second offense. A crash involving distracted driving that injures or kills someone can result in felony charges.

In Iowa, a bill to ban cellphone use behind the wheel is heading to Governor Kim Reynolds' (R) desk for her signature. The bill passed both the House and Senate by a large margin.

---

## Mock Crash Coverage

**KAAL-TV**

**05.16.25**

[Mock crash shows students dangers of drunk, distracted driving - ABC 6 News - kaaltv.com](http://www.kaaltv.com)

*By: Chandler Jackson*

(ABC 6 News) – At Lewiston-Altura High School, a mock crash performed by student and staff volunteers and local emergency services but into stark reality the dangers of driving while drunk or distracted.

Two wrecked cars were set up outside the front of the school: one full of teens excited for graduation with a driver that had been drinking beforehand, the other with two faculty members of the school.

Students watched as their classmates reacted to the crash in real time – staggering around the scene, calling 911, seeing one of their friends slumped over the hood having smashed through the windshield.

“In the moment, it didn’t feel like it was fake,” said senior Emily Hansen, one of the mock crash victims. “Like my hands were actually shaking.”

As the scene played out, Lewiston Ambulance director Matt Essig walked the crowd through each step, including how long it took for first responders to arrive.

“We picked to do it here at the end of May as we’re approaching graduation because they really needed to be reminded that choices that they potentially are going to make in the next few weeks can have everlasting consequences,” he said.

This scenario has played out in front of Lewiston-Altura High School for eight years.

It’s a collaboration between Lewiston Police, Fire, and Ambulance, as well as the Winona County Sheriff’s Department and Attorney’s Office, Mayo 1 rescue helicopter, and the Towards Zero Deaths program to emphasize the dangers of driving while intoxicated or distracted.

Traffic crashes like this are among the leading cause of death for teens, killing 40 on average each year and injuring more than 3,000.

Just in April, Minnesota’s distracted driving enforcement campaign saw the state patrol issue more than 6,400 citations for hands-free cellphone violations across the state.

That's a more than 1,000 citation increase compared to last April.

Last year, there were at least 29 fatalities and more than 130 serious injuries attributed to distracted driving as well.

The consequences are real, as another guest of the scenario described afterwards.

Real life crash victim Megan Pierce-Campbell shared her story in an assembly following the scene.

Campbell was responsible for her own crash in 2012, having gotten behind the wheel after drinking.

"People often times don't get the full picture," she said. "They hear about DWI's and crashes like this and they don't see the full scope of things and so to hear it from somebody who's actually lived it is incredibly important."

From watching Mayo 1 land in their parking lot to take away one of their teachers, to watching a friend loaded into a hearse instead of an ambulance, the scenario left a lasting mark on many.

Some left in shock by the visuals.

"Seeing my friends and all the blood and like how bad the cars actually were," said senior Josie Trejo. "That kind of like hit me the most, I think."

Others by how long things took.

"Just actually realizing how long it does take for first responders, especially in a small town, to get to us," said Zane Nelson, another senior.

The organizers only hoping their message got through.

"We don't want to do this," said Essig. "We don't want to see this, it needs to stop. So if they can make safe choices, that makes our job easier."

---

## **SE TZD Workshop Media Coverage**

**KAAL- TV**

**05.07.25**

[Traffic safety stakeholders hold Toward Zero Deaths workshop in Rochester - ABC 6 News - kaaltv.com](#)

*By: KAALTV*

(ABC 6 News) — It's an ambitious goal with a powerful name: Toward Zero Deaths.

The effort across Minnesota aims to lower the number of crashes and deaths we see on the road.

On Wednesday, around 180 traffic safety stakeholders from southeast Minnesota came to Rochester for a workshop.

Topics at the forefront of the discussion included the impacts of mental health on our roads, innovative strategies that address traffic safety issues, and cannabis legalization.

Law enforcement says polydrug use is a contributing factor to a third of those deaths.

“People are mixing the drugs thinking they will counteract each other, and I am talking about alcohol and marijuana use and actually, that amplifies greatly. So one plus one equals three is what we say with impairment being there,” said Kristine Hernandez, the state communications director of Towards Zero Deaths.

Since Towards Zero Deaths started in 2003, traffic-related deaths have declined 27% through 2024.

---

## **TZD Tuesday Media Coverage**

### **KTTC-TV**

**07.20.25**

#### **[MN Toward Zero Deaths reminds drivers to stop at rural intersections](#)**

By: [Ryan Paris](#)

ROCHESTER, Minn. (KTTC) – With Minnesota entering peak growing season, and corn reaching its full height, MN Toward Zero Deaths is [reminding drivers](#) to stop at all rural intersections.

MN Toward Zero Deaths stressed that the height of corn stalks can obstruct visibility at intersections, which creates blind spots that could lead to crashes. It also said drivers should not rely on indicators such as dust during the day, or headlights at night, that another vehicle may be coming. It said these “do not provide adequate warning.”

In order to stay safe, the organization said drivers should stop at all street corners, even if there’s no stop signs, the other road has a stop sign, or if you think no one is coming.

The organization said too many injuries and deaths occur at these rural intersections, and that saving a few seconds isn’t worth the risk. It said, without exception, everyone should stop at these corners and intersections.

**KIMT-TV**

**02.25.25**

**[Despite warmer weather, be on guard against tricky morning driving conditions | Minnesota | kimt.com](#)**

By: *Mike Bunge*

You may be happy to see the snow melt, but that can produce dangerous morning travel conditions. **Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths** (TZD), the state's cornerstone traffic safety program, says melting snow during the day can quickly refreeze as temperatures drop at night, creating icy conditions on roads and sidewalks.

TZD says drivers should:

- Be extra cautious, especially on bridges, overpasses and shaded areas where ice can form unexpectedly.
- Keep a safe following distance.
- Avoid sudden stops or sharp turns.