

MILES PER HOUR

Newsletter of the Office of Traffic Safety



Summer 2013

395 Traffic Deaths in 2012: Up 7 Percent From 2011

A mild winter, a slight increase in miles traveled and a spike in motorcyclist deaths in 2012 are a few of the reasons Minnesota had its first increase in traffic deaths since 2007. The 395 traffic deaths in 2012 is a 7 percent increase from 2011 (368), yet represents a 40 percent decrease in deaths from a decade ago.

The 2012 deaths include 116 unbelted motorist deaths, 104 drunk driving crash victims and 55 motorcyclist deaths. The 2012 fatality count is the second lowest annual death figure on record since 1944, when 356 people were killed.

As of August 1 of this year, there have been 206 road deaths compared to 180 deaths at this time in 2012.

"The big picture shows we've made great progress in the past decade, but the increase in deaths in 2012 is troubling, as is the climbing road death toll this year," says DPS Commissioner Mona Dohman. "These recent stats demonstrate the ongoing issues we face to improving Minnesota road safety, but they are all issues that can be prevented with smart and safe driver behavior."

Despite this year's uptick in traffic deaths, driving behavior

appears to be improving in certain areas. Seat belt use is at a record high 94 percent and a continuing drop in DWI arrests and drunk driving deaths signals people are making safer choices.

Minnesota 2012 Motor Vehicle Crash Facts Highlights

Fatality Rate Per Vehicle Miles Traveled

The state's preliminary 2012 fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled is less than one person, 0.69 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. The U.S. fatality rate is 1.09. In 2011,

(most recent national data), Minnesota was second behind Massachusetts for the lowest fatality rate in the U.S. Officials say despite the increase in deaths in 2012, the fatality rate will

remain among the lowest in the nation once 2012 national data is complete.

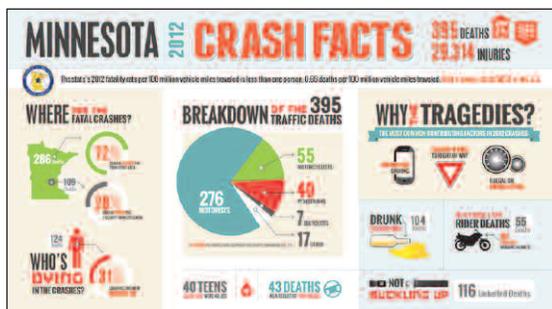
There were 57.0 billion vehicle miles traveled in Minnesota last year, less than 1 percent higher than the 56.7 billion in 2011.

Deaths During the Past Decade

The 395 deaths marks a 40 percent decrease from 10 years ago: 2003 — 655; 2004 — 567; 2005 — 559; 2006 — 494; 2007 — 510; 2008 — 455; 2009 — 421; 2010 — 411; 2011 — 368.

The Office of Traffic Safety says proactive campaigns anchored in the state's cornerstone traffic safety initiative — Toward Zero Deaths — have helped reduce deaths significantly during the past decade: Increased enforcement coupled with educational efforts and media campaigns; MnDOT road engineering enhancements; and improved emergency medical and trauma response.

View the complete [2012 Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts report](#).



[View the Minnesota 2012 Crash Facts Infographic.](#)

10,342 Cited During Spring "Click It or Ticket" Campaign

A statewide Click It or Ticket seat belt enforcement campaign, May 20–June 2, resulted in 10,342 motorists cited for not wearing seat belts, according to preliminary results from the Office of Traffic Safety.

Campaign results were reported by 323 agencies. Included in the citation count were 256 child passenger safety seat and booster seat violations. Booster seats are the law for children who have outgrown a forward-facing restraint. It is safest to keep a child in a booster until the child is 4 feet 9 inches tall, or at least age 8.

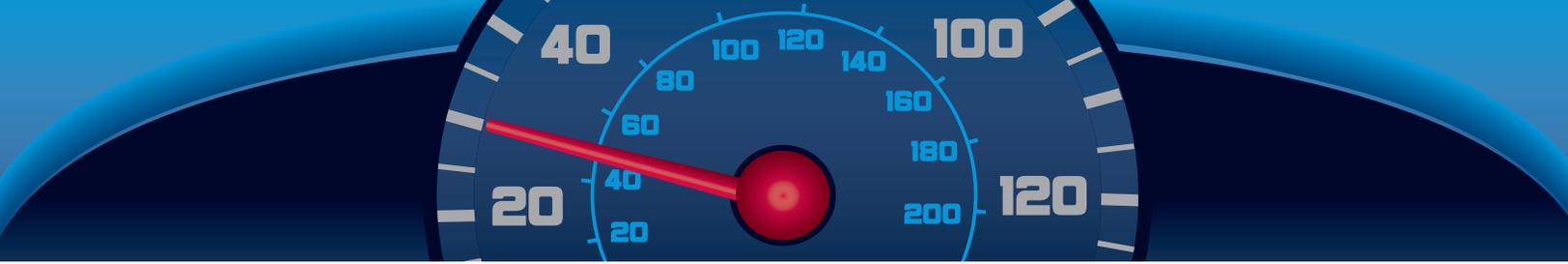
In a similar campaign last May, 12,639 motorists were cited.

There are around 120 unbelted traffic deaths each year in Minnesota. In the last three years in Minnesota (2010–2012), there were 852 vehicle occupant traffic deaths, of which 361 (42 percent) were not buckled up.



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St. Michael Teen Repeats as PSA Contest Champ



A screen shot of “Nightmare,” the 2013 *Buckle Up and Pay Attention, Teens!* contest top spot, by winner Eli Guillou of St. Michael. Nightmare”

Defending champion Eli Guillou of St. Michael-Albertville High School won the 2013 *Buckle Up and Pay Attention, Teens!* TV Commercial Challenge for his 30-second public service announcement highlighting the dangers associated with distracted driving. The Office of Traffic Safety and AAA sponsored the contest.

Guillou, who also won first place in last year’s *Buckle Up, Teens! TV Commercial Challenge*, received \$1,000 from AAA and will see his winning PSA air statewide during the MTV Video Music Awards August 25. AAA also awarded the

second- and third-place winners with \$600 and \$400, respectively.

Guillou received 3,159 (51 percent) of the total 6,252 votes during the two-week voting period.

To view the winning spot and the three other finalists, visit rockthebelt.org.

Teen Traffic Crash Facts, 2010 – 2012:

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in Minnesota due to driver inexperience, risk-taking behavior, distractions, nighttime driving, speeding and seat belt non-use.

- 102 teen vehicle occupants (ages 13–19) were killed; only 44 (43 percent) were known to be belted.
- Another 384 teens were seriously injured in crashes; only 223 (58 percent) were known to be belted.
- In 2012 alone, there were 12,656 teen drivers involved in crashes. Officers at the scene listed 2,840 (22 percent) of them as being distracted.

“Point of Impact” — Teen Video Targets Parents of New Drivers

Point of Impact” is a new, dramatic video aimed at educating parents about their responsibilities and roles to support teen driver safety. The eight-minute piece serves as the anchoring element to an Office of Traffic Safety teen driver parent awareness program designed for driver’s education schools to use for designated “parent nights.”

In order to reduce crashes, injuries and deaths involving teen drivers, it’s essential for driver’s education schools to get parents involved, says Gordy Pehrson, OTS Youth Programs Coordinator. Parents need to know about the risks associated with new teen drivers and be provided with important guidance and tips to help them reduce those risks.

“We need to break the mindset of parents that a newly licensed teen driver is a safe

driver,” says Pehrson. “This program educates parents that the safety of their teen behind the wheel is up to them. Our goal is to make them aware that while it may be convenient for their newly licensed teen to drive themselves, convenience can’t be put ahead of safety, especially when it involves high-risk situations for inexperienced drivers.”

The “Point of Impact” video showcases three crash victims who were impacted by teen drivers. It also features Minnesota State Patrol Trooper Azzahya Williams, who delivers key messages to parents.

To learn more about the teen driver parent awareness program and the ‘Point of Impact’ video, go to www.ots.dps.mn.gov and click on “Teen Driving” under “Traffic Topics.”

Agencies Urged to Address Pedestrian Safety, Enforcement

Crossing the road remains a dangerous activity in Minnesota. During the past decade, the number of pedestrian deaths and injuries have remained constant, while other traffic deaths have been on the decline. Last year, there were 40 pedestrian deaths, matching the 2011 count — and each year more than one-quarter of the pedestrian deaths tested at 0.08 alcohol-concentration.

As a result of the steady pedestrian numbers, the Office of Traffic Safety is calling on agencies to make efforts to address this issue — especially in the Twin Cities area.

“Increasing awareness of pedestrian safety will help reduce pedestrian-vehicle crashes, as well as reduce the fatalities and serious injuries that result from these crashes,” says Donna Berger, OTS director.

One agency that is doing its part to improve pedestrian safety is the University of Minnesota Police Department, which plans to add funds to its existing enforcement grant for on-campus pedestrian patrols due to the large amount of foot traffic in the area. In addition, earned media and Share the Road materials will supplement an educational campaign to raise awareness of pedestrian-related crashes.

Berger encourages agencies to consider a small pedestrian enforcement and education effort timed around the back-to-school or campus period. OTS will offer pedestrian safety-related media materials later this summer for agencies to customize to promote these campaigns.

OTS reminds pedestrians to cross where it’s safe and look out for their own safety, as distracted drivers aren’t looking out for them. In return, Berger stresses that motorists must pay attention, scan the road and stop for crossing pedestrians at crosswalks and intersections, unless signals communicate otherwise.

Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center Launches “Ride Sober” TV Spot

View and share the new “Ride Sober” PSA.



Minnesota's "DWI Enforcer All-Stars Recognized at Twins Game



The Minnesota Twins honored the 2013 DWI All-Stars during pregame festivities at Target Field June 27.

The 34 law enforcement officers and prosecutors who make up this year's all-star squad were selected for outstanding service in enforcement and in prosecution of drunk driving. Minnesota State Patrol Trooper Gordon

Shank led all officers with 269 DWI arrests in 2012.

This is the sixth DWI Enforcer All-Star team, which is presented by OTS and sponsored by AAA Minneapolis.

Twin Cities All-Stars — DWI Arrests

Jeff Bilcik, Attorney General (prosecutor)
Jordan Davis, Minneapolis Police — 110
Tony Gabriel, Maplewood Police — 74
Eric Gadbois, White Bear Lake Police — 57
James W. Goltart Jr., Minneapolis Police — 130
Todd Groves, Eden Prairie Police — 89
Paul Henstein, Minnesota State Patrol (West Metro district) — 168
Mark Hibbard, Minnesota State Patrol (West Metro district) — 156
Michael Lee, Minnesota State Patrol (West Metro district) — 118
Andrew Martinek, Minnesota State Patrol (West Metro district) — 157
Matt Olson, Maple Grove Police — 60
Santiago Rodriguez, St. Paul Police — 82
Mike Sellner, White Bear Lake Police — 49
Gordon Shank, Minnesota State Patrol (West Metro district) — 269
Adam Stier, Lakeville Police — 77
Jack Tiegs, Minnesota State Patrol (East Metro district) — 118
Timothy Tourville, Crystal Police — 61
Jason Waage, Rosemount Police — 53

Greater Minnesota All-Stars — DWI Arrests

Chad Anderson, Moorhead Police — 63
Kyle Backer, Minnesota State Patrol (St. Cloud district) — 72
Brad Barrientos, Winona Police — 37
Garrett Bondhus, Minnesota State Patrol (Rochester district) — 72
Jeff Burbank, Red Wing Police — 47
Tom Coulter, Blue Earth County Sheriff — 35
Mark Diaz, Cass County Sheriff — 25
Jesse Gilbertson, Big Lake Police — 20
Chris James, Minnesota State Patrol (St. Cloud district) — 86
Brian Martin, Blue Earth County Sheriff — 32
Jeff McCormack, Austin Police — 61
Joshua W. McCuen, Worthington Police — 52
Chad Myers, Winona County Sheriff — 122
Louis Norell, Windom Police — 9
Matt O'Rourke, Grand Rapids Police — 23
Steve Ott, Winona County (prosecutor)

State's Ignition Interlock Program Charts 10,000 Users

This summer, Minnesota marked a milestone with 10,216 DWI offenders who have used or are currently using ignition interlock. The state began using the devices in a pilot program in two counties in 2007. In July 2011, interlock use was expanded statewide as part of strengthened DWI sanctions.

To date, 3,093 people have graduated from the interlock program — meaning they used the device for the required period without reoffending. Currently, 7,123 people are using interlock.

A main goal of interlock is to prevent impaired driving and reduce DWI reoffenses — of the 10,216 interlock users, less than one percent has reoffended. Interlock can reduce repeat DWI offenses on average 64 percent, according to the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

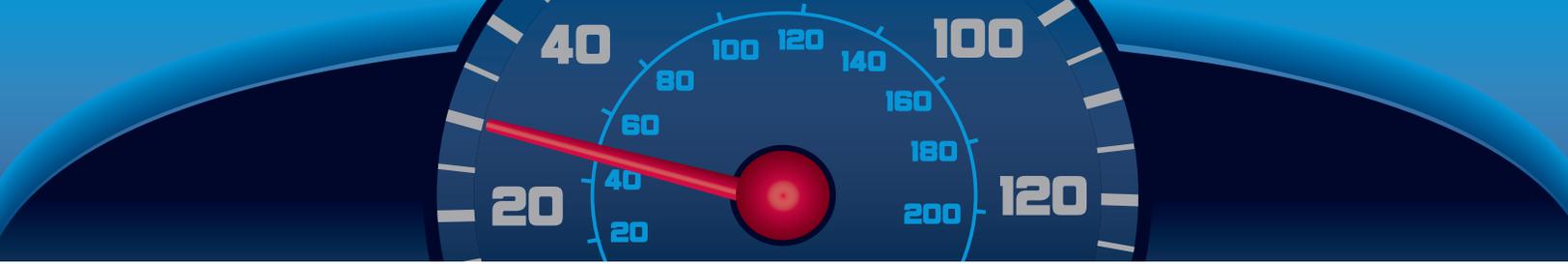
Minnesota's drunk driving deaths dropped in 2012 — there were 104 deaths last year — as did the number of DWI arrests. Yet, the drunk driving issue is far from solved, with one in seven Minnesota drivers with a DWI on record. Officials see interlock as the next step in preventing drunk driving.

"Interlock benefits Minnesota's road safety by ensuring offenders are driving sober, while also providing offenders with a pathway to legal driving," says Jody Oscarson, Office of Traffic Safety impaired driving programs coordinator. "This technology helps to support those impacted and improve public safety."

Traffic safety partners — especially law enforcement and the courts — are strongly encouraged to continue educating DWI offenders about the benefits of interlock. Resources are available at MinnesotalgnitionInterlock.org to promote the program to local DWI offenders.

Repeat DWI offenders, as well as first-time offenders arrested at 0.16 and above alcohol-concentration level must use interlock in order to regain legal driving privileges, or face at least one year without a driver's license. Offenders with three or more offenses are required to install interlock and use for three to six years, or they will never regain driving privileges.

Each year in Minnesota, 40 percent of the drunk driving deaths involve repeat offenders.



DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS



As Deaths Rise, So Must Our Actions to Prevent the Tragedies

Donna Berger, Office of Traffic Safety director

It's more than half way through 2013, and Minnesota's traffic deaths are surging ahead of last year's pace. At the time of publishing, the state

topped the 200 death count. We are about 15 percent ahead of the 2012 pace and on track to suffer around 450 deaths for the year.

Further adding to the concern was a deadly 2012, when 395 people were killed, marking the first increase in deaths in five years, up from 368 in 2011.

The rising fatality movement is upsetting and tragic. We must continue to remember the people who have lost their lives in these crashes

to help motivate us to prevent future crashes.

There's no clear reasoning behind the recent spike in the fatalities, but deadly crashes are always linked to common poor driving behaviors and decisions: drunk, distracted and speeding driving, in addition to lack of belt use. A slight but not significant rise in vehicle miles traveled may also be serving as a factor.

We also know of continuing problem areas. Last year, motorcyclist deaths jumped 33 percent from 2012, and this year, rider deaths are again rising — with many of the victims again males in the 40–60 age range. Meanwhile, pedestrian deaths have shown no sign of dropping over the years, and to-date in 2013, they are consistent with last year's numbers.

Now is not the time to be discouraged

by these numbers. Now is the time to act. Every Minnesota driver has the tools to take on the problems that make our roads dangerous. Everyone has a responsibility to drive these deaths downward — by being a good role model for children, by speaking up to stop driver distractions, by reinforcing belt use to family and friends, by driving at safe speeds.

These crashes that tear up families can be prevented — it's up to each of us as drivers to do the preventing.

Please travel safely.

GUEST COLUMN

The 100 Deadliest Days

Carol Bufton, Minnesota Safety Council president



Memorial Day through Labor Day is known as the 100 deadliest days on our nation's roads for teen drivers. Folks involved in traffic safety know how dangerous our roads are for

teen drivers and we know that teen crashes are preventable.

It's no secret that inexperience, distractions, nighttime driving, speeding and failing to use seat belts are major factors that put teens at higher risk. And it's no secret that parents play a critical role in keeping teens safe behind the wheel. But they may not be aware of exactly how best to protect their new drivers.

In addition to providing lots of supervised experience behind the wheel and requiring seat belt use, the Minnesota Teen Safe Driving Coalition asks parents to focus on nighttime driving, passengers and cell phone use.

Teen drivers' crash risk sharply increases after dark. While Minnesota state law permits teens to drive unsupervised until midnight, research has proven it's not safe.

Parents should be aware of the risks involved with passengers, too. Those who work in the world of traffic safety know — but most parents may not know — that just one teen passenger increases a teen driver's crash risk by as much as 48 percent. Minnesota law allows new drivers to carry one passenger during the first six months of licensure and up to three passengers afterward. However, parents should consider the data before allowing

their sons and daughters to drive or ride with other teens.

Parents also need to know that cell phone use is not only a dangerous distraction, it's illegal for drivers younger than 18. Texting is illegal for drivers of all ages.

The Minnesota Teen Safe Driving Coalition was established by The Allstate Foundation and the National Safety Council to raise awareness about why teen crashes occur and what we can do to prevent them. If you are not already involved with our coalition, I encourage you to join and become an advocate for teens' safety on our roadways. Let's work together to make the summer season safer for our teen drivers.

Send story ideas for *Miles Per Hour* to nathan.bowie@state.mn.us.