

MILES PER HOUR

Newsletter of the Office of Traffic Safety



Winter 2013

2012 Traffic Deaths Spike, Motorcyclist Fatalities Up Big

For the first time in five years, the number of Minnesota annual traffic deaths increased in 2012 as 378 people were killed, according to preliminary reports from the Office of Traffic Safety. In 2011, 368 people died from crashes.

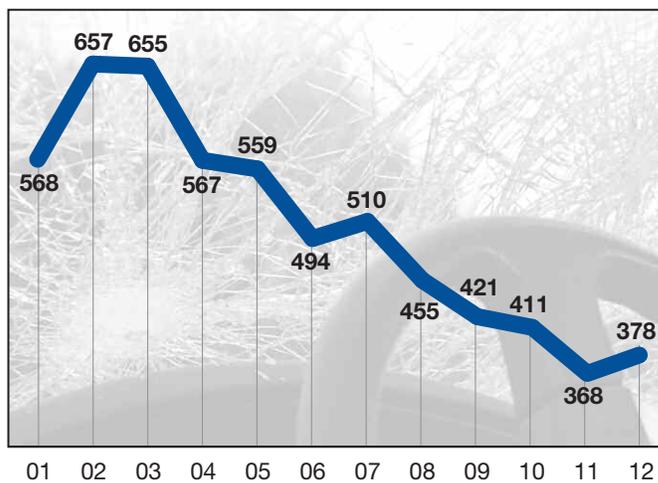
OTS officials say a jump in motorcyclist fatalities was a large factor for the increase. A warmer year led to a longer and deadlier motorcycle season — 53 riders were killed, a 26 percent increase in deaths from 2011.

Final data for the year will be announced in June. Officials expect to see the common traffic safety issues as the primary contributing factors for the 2012 deaths: drunk driving, seat belt non-use, speeding and distraction. Pedestrian deaths also remain steady.

“After years of significant progress to limit tragedies, it’s tragic that more people were taken away from us in these preventable crashes,” says

Donna Berger, OTS director. “The increase in lives lost must serve as motivation for all motorists to practice safer driving in 2013.”

Since 2000, the state’s annual traffic deaths have trended downward (see graph).



In 2011, Minnesota had among the lowest and safest death rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the nation at 0.65.

2012 Preliminary Results:

- The 378 deaths include motorists (281 — down from the final 283 number in 2011); motorcyclists (53 — up from 42); pedestrians (38 — down from 40); and bicyclists (six — up from five).
- DWI arrests — 24,671. There were 29,918 DWI arrests in 2011. The preliminary DWI arrest count will grow as alcohol-concentration data is finalized. Crash data regarding drunk driving deaths will be reported later this year. Each year, drunk-driving related crashes account for more than one-third of the state’s total death count. In 2011, there were 111 drunk driving-related deaths.
- 2012 deadliest months — September (48), August (42) and October (38). The safest months were April (19), January (20) and March (23).

2,551 Didn’t Drive Sober, Got Pulled Over in December

A statewide enhanced DWI enforcement campaign in December resulted in the arrest of 2,551 impaired motorists. Preliminary DWI arrest totals were reported by 337 law enforcement agencies.

The highest alcohol-concentration reported was 0.47. Twenty-three agencies reported their highest alcohol-concentration in an arrest was at or above 0.30, and more than 135 agencies reported their highest alcohol-concentration was at or above 0.20. The legal limit is 0.08.

The State Patrol reported 544 DWI arrests during the effort. In the Twin Cities, St. Paul P.D. led with 137 arrests, followed by Minneapolis P.D. (86); Bloomington P.D. (44); White Bear Lake P.D. (37) and Brooklyn Park P.D. (34).

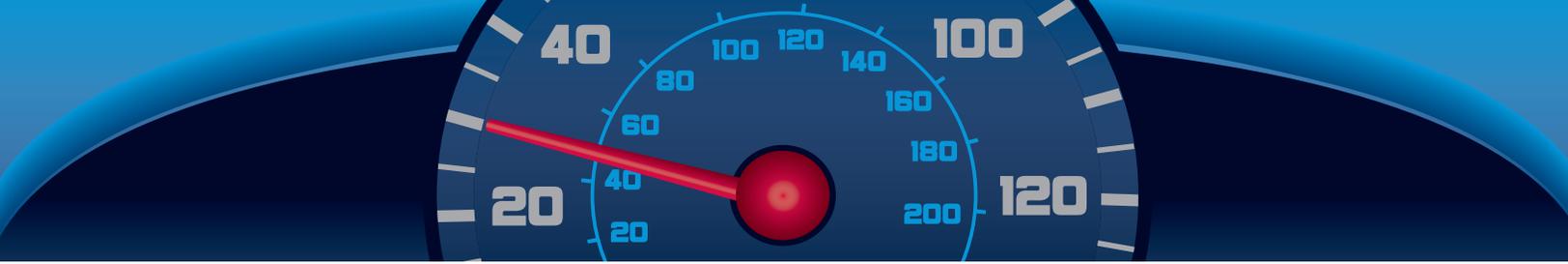
In Greater Minnesota, where a majority of alcohol-related traffic deaths occur each year, St. Cloud P.D. arrested 43; Rochester P.D. (40); Moorhead P.D. (33); Duluth P.D. (23) and Red Lake Law Enforcement (23).

In Minnesota, nearly 30,000 people are arrested for DWI each year.



inside

- 2 *Teens Turn Cameras on to Seat Belts*
- 3 *13 Counties Targeted for Extra DWI Patrols*
- 4 *OTS Director Donna Berger: An Increase in Deaths in 2012 Must Motivate Us for a Safer 2013*



Teens Turn Cameras on to Seat Belts, Distracted Driving

Minnesota teenagers have the chance to go viral: Students in grades 9–12 are called on to produce a 30-second TV public service announcement promoting the importance of buckling up or the dangers of distracted driving. The top teen will win \$1,000 and their spot will air during the televised MTV Video Music Awards in 2013.

The *Buckle Up and Pay Attention Teens!* TV Commercial Challenge allows teens to choose their safety topic: seat belts or distracted driving. The contest is sponsored by the Office of Traffic Safety and AAA. The deadline for entries is Monday, April 15.

The contest's finalists will be selected by OTS and AAA for a public online vote in May. AAA will award first-, second- and third-place winners with \$1,000, \$600 and \$400, respectively.

"Traffic crashes are the leading killer of teens and this contest is one way to steer attention to common problems with teens behind the wheel," says Gordy Pehrson, DPS teen driving coordinator. "When teens share their creations with peers, it enhances the value and importance of the message."

Teen Driving Crash Deaths/Injuries (2009 – 2011)

- 108 teen vehicle occupants (ages 13 – 19), were killed; only 35 (32 percent) were belted.
- Another 408 teens were seriously injured in crashes; only 226 (55 percent) were belted.



The 2012 Buckle Up, Teens! Contest Winner
St. Michael's Eli Guillou, "[Big Deal](#)"

2013 Enforcement Calendar

The Office of Traffic Safety is providing grants of more than \$7 million to 317 Minnesota law enforcement agencies and community partner groups to conduct traffic safety enforcement and education efforts, October 2012 – September 2013.

During a visit to several Minnesota regions last October, Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mona Dohman cited the number of lives lost on state roads as the reason Minnesota "continues to invest in traffic safety."

Statewide enforcement and education campaigns in 2013 include the following:

- Speeding: March 18–22.
- Seat Belt: April 5–14.

- Distracted Driving: April 18.
- Seat Belt: May 20–June 2.
- Speeding: June 17–23.
- Speeding: July 6–21.
- Ted Foss Move Over Law: August 31.
- DWI: August 16–Sept. 2.
- Dates for an October seat belt and December DWI campaign will be announced later in 2013.

Extra DWI patrols will also be conducted in the state's 13 most dangerous drunk driving counties throughout the year (see page 3 story).

Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center (MMSC) News

New Course Offered through MMSC

The Motorcycle Safety Center is offering the new *SMARTrainer Plus* course this winter. The course will allow students to practice motorcycle safety strategies and concepts on the *Honda SMARTrainer* motorcycle simulator.

Students will receive hands-on practice in identifying and dealing with hazards while operating an advanced, interactive instructional tool with standard motorcycle controls and realistic traffic situations. Intensive simulations will test skills and require students to evaluate and address traffic hazards and traps.

The course is being offered at the new state-of-the-art Transportation Training Center in Afton, Minn.

MMSC Training Season Begins in April

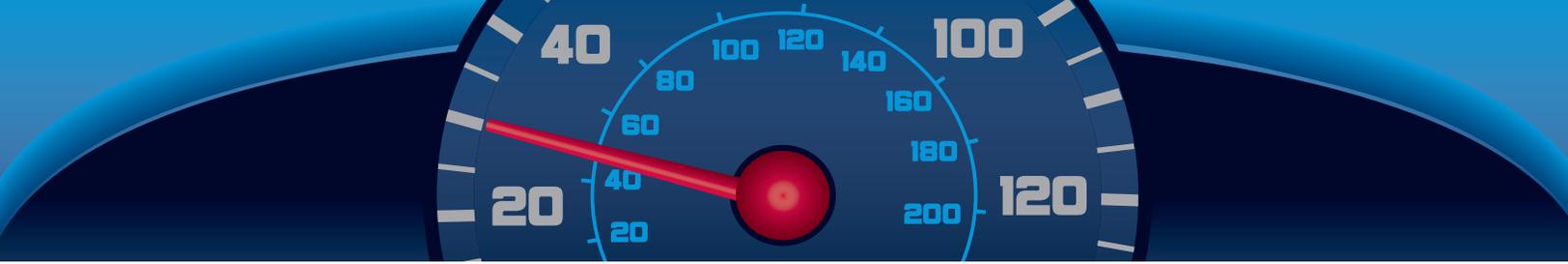
The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center will kick off its 2013 training season April 2. Training will be offered by Minnesota State Colleges at 30 locations through October 2013.

For more than 25 years, the MMSC has provided affordable training and education by Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF)-certified Rider-Coaches. Courses range from basic to advanced-level and feature motorcycle maintenance, workshops, seminars and three-wheel mc training.

This year, Dakota County Technical College is bringing back the Basic Rider Refresher Course. This five-hour course serves as an opportunity for Basic Rider Course graduates who have their motorcycle license to gain additional coaching and practice time on state-program motorcycles.

To learn more about courses or to register for a course, visit www.motorcyclesafety.org.





13 Counties Targeted for Extra DWI Patrols

Roads in Minnesota's 13 counties with the highest combined totals of drunk driving traffic deaths and alcohol-related serious injuries will be the focus for increased DWI enforcement through September 2013. [View the infographic.](#)

The extra DWI patrols are part of a 12-month, federally funded enforcement program that began in October 2012.

These 13 counties accounted for nearly half of the state's drunk driving deaths (160) and more than half of the state's alcohol-related serious injuries (436) during 2009–2011:

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Hennepin | 6. Olmsted | 11. Becker |
| 2. Ramsey | 7. Washington | 12. Meeker |
| 3. St. Louis | 8. Stearns | 13. Otter Tail |
| 4. Anoka | 9. Wright | |
| 5. Dakota | 10. Sherburne | |

New to the "13 counties" list are Becker,

Meeker and Otter Tail counties; taken off the list from 2012 enforcement are Carver, Rice and Scott counties. The "13 counties" are determined by their total number of drunk driving deaths and alcohol-related serious injuries during a three-year period.

Agencies in the 13 counties will use high-visibility enforcement tactics to alert motorists of increased enforcement — including electronic message board signage and heavy patrols along specific corridors. Advertising will accompany the enforcement to encourage Minnesotans to avoid driving impaired.

"These counties account for a great portion of our drunk driving tragedies and investing in DWI enforcement and education can help prevent impaired driving incidents," says Jean Ryan, Office of Traffic Safety impaired driving coordinator.

State Seat Belt Compliance Continues to Climb

Minnesota's new seat belt compliance rate is 93.6 percent, marking another increase in belt use, according to Office of Traffic Safety. OTS conducted its annual observational belt use survey in June 2012. [View the infographic.](#)

OTS attributes the continued increase in seat belt use to awareness and enforcement of the state's primary seat belt law, which became effective in June 2009.

"The continued increase in belt use reflects a growing culture of safety on our roads that will lead to fewer tragedies," says Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mona Dohman. "Yet, the issue remains serious considering more than 100 people are killed annually who were not buckled up and could be with us today."

Charting Minnesota Seat Belt Use Rates and Unbelted Deaths

- 1986 (the year Minnesota first passed a seat belt law): Belt compliance was 20 percent; 280 unbelted deaths.
- 2003 (10 years ago): Belt compliance was 79.4 percent; 257 unbelted deaths.
- 2008 (five years ago): Belt use was 86.7 percent; 150 unbelted deaths.
- 2011: Belt use was 92.7 percent; 120 unbelted deaths.

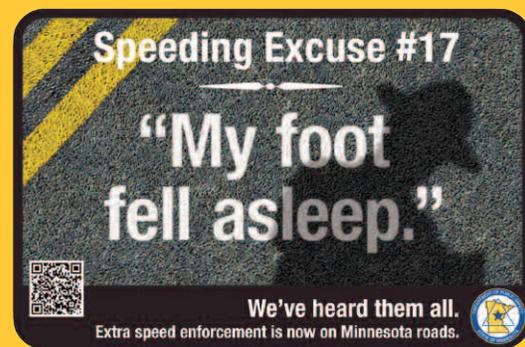
Seat Belt Survey Results

- Data were collected at 240 sites in 43 counties (based on where 85 percent of the state's road deaths occurred on average, 2007 – 2009). 16,924 front seat occupants were observed.
- Belt use rate by vehicle type: SUV — 95.9; Car — 93.9; Van — 93 percent; Pickup — 87.2.
- Pickup occupant belt use is historically low, but has improved (up from 76 percent five years ago).
- Belt use rate by gender: Females — 95.6 percent; Males — 91.9 percent. This gap continues to close; 10 years ago, the gender gap was around 8 percent.
- Belt use rate by age: 0–10 — 97.4 percent; 11–15 — 84 percent; 16–29 — 93.3 percent; 30–64 — 94.1 percent; 65 and older — 91.9 percent. While a great majority of children were observed riding in car seats, officials note that car seat clinics report three in four car seats are used incorrectly. Belt use is low among 11-15 year olds: During the past five years, 31 were killed, only nine were belted.

Promote Traffic Safety in Your Community

Traffic safety partners and advocates are encouraged to review the Office of Traffic Safety [online catalog](#) to order educational and promotional materials at no charge.

A variety of materials are available, including brochures, posters, banners, yard signs, window clings, bar coasters and more. Items cover many traffic topics.

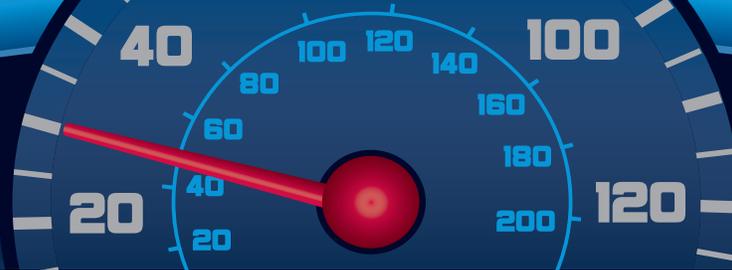


A new item available for law enforcement partners are *Toward Zero Deaths* tear-off cards. Three versions of cards are available (seat belts, speeding, DWI). Officers are encouraged to distribute cards to motorists at traffic stops to educate drivers about the purpose of enhanced enforcement efforts.

If you have ideas for a new educational/promotional item, email Nathan.Bowie@state.mn.us

Sign Up for Traffic Safety News

Stay informed and up-to-date on all Office of Traffic Safety news items. Contact Nathan.Bowie@state.mn.us to request to be added to the traffic safety news release email list. Find [archived traffic safety news releases](#) online.



DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS



An Increase in Deaths in 2012 Must Motivate Us for a Safer 2013

Donna Berger, Director, Office of Traffic Safety

As a Minnesota traffic safety advocate, I share many of your discouraged feelings about the increase in traffic deaths in 2012.

The Office of Traffic Safety is projecting a final number of around 390 deaths for the year, about 22 more deaths than in 2011.

Our hearts go out to the families of these crash victims, lives taken too soon in a horrific and violent crash. For traffic safety stakeholders, it's so important to remember these victims and use their tragic stories as motivation to prevent future deaths and injuries.

The lives lost reinforce that changing driver behavior is glacial in pace, and it reminds us that we could face similar set-backs in the years to come. The 2012 fatalities underscore that unsafe driving remains an epidemic that requires our investment and resources to pave the way for a safer future.

Just as we can't forget these crash victims, we can't forget and lose perspective of the progress made to advance traffic safety in our state. The approach we've applied to reduce deaths and injuries has been incredibly effective. The formula of targeted enforcement linked with educational outreach is core to what has driven a decade of road safety success — along with a backbone of important laws, better roads, efficient trauma care and response, and safer vehicles.

Our goal, ultimately, is to produce a safer driving culture in Minnesota. And the foundation for creating this culture is the work of law enforcement, safe community partners, EMS and engineers. The safer driving culture we are trying to foster starts behind the wheel, with a driver, focused and prepared to drive. It starts with a driver who hangs up and buckles up. This improved driving culture starts with a motorcyclist who seeks rider training. It starts with a motorist driving cooperatively, not competitively — and it starts with the guy in the bar making the call for a sober ride.

Let's have a safe 2013 — let's continue to drive toward zero deaths.

2012 TZD Conference Draws Huge Crowd



Roughly 900 traffic safety officials and stakeholders gathered at the annual *Toward Zero Deaths (TZD)* conference in Bloomington Oct. 22-23, 2012, to discuss best practices and address ongoing and new traffic safety challenges. The conference was the most-attended to date.

Retired Maj. Mike Asleson, Minnesota State Patrol, received the Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award for his exceptional leadership in efforts to improve traffic safety in Minnesota, build partnerships and mentor others in the field.

Additional 2012 TZD Award Recipients:

Engineering — Brad Estochen, MnDOT state traffic safety engineer.



Enforcement — Lt. Jason Engeldinger, Minnesota State Patrol.

Judicial/Court Systems — Mark Starr, St. Louis County Courts judge.

Education — Gail Weinholzer, AAA Minnesota-Iowa public affairs director.

Emergency Medical and Trauma Services — Dan DeSmet, North Memorial Ambulance Service-Marshall Region operations manager.

Child Passenger Safety — Jennifer Booge, Mahube Community Council CPS technical instructor.

Media Star — ABC 6 news team, KAAL-TV (Rochester/Austin).

Distinguished Public Leadership — Steve Simon, retired law professor (University of Minnesota).

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