**Deer Facts & Talking Points**

**Key Messages**

1. **Deer-vehicle crashes can be devastating.**
* In the last five years (2016–2020) in Minnesota, there were 6,218 deer crashes reported to DPS, resulting in 18 deaths.
* 15 of the 18 deaths were motorcyclists.
* These crashes also resulted in 124 serious injuries, of which 109 were motorcyclists.

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| **Deer Collision Crashes, Fatalities, and Injuries: 2016-2020** |
| Year | Crashes | Fatalities | Serious Injuries | All Fatalities and Injuries |
| 2016 | 1,295 | 1 | 29 | 251 |
| 2017 | 1,322 | 4 | 22 | 236 |
| 2018 | 1,226 | 6 | 26 | 214 |
| 2019 | 1,263 | 3 | 19 | 194 |
| 2020 | 1,112 | 4 | 28 | 178 |
| Total | 6,218 | 18 | 124 | 1,073 |

1. **Don’t veer for deer**
* Do not swerve when encountering deer. It is safer to brake and hit a deer than to swerve into oncoming traffic or go off the road.
* Always where your seat belt, it’s the first line of defense in a crash. As soon as you see a deer or other animal, brake as quickly as possible.
* Motorcycles are the exception to the rule:
	+ When encountering an animal, slow down and use both brakes to stop.
	+ If a larger animal jumps out in front of you, use emergency braking (applying both front and rear brakes) to stop as quickly as possible.
	+ If you are unable to stop in time and/or contact is imminent after maximum breaking, and you have room in the lane, release the brakes and attempt to swerve slowly behind the animal.
	+ Always try to maintain control of your motorcycle.
1. **Deer can appear anywhere**
* No longer are deer just in rural areas, in recent years they have been seen increasingly in urban areas
* Deer are most often seen during dawn and dusk hours.
* Don’t count on deer whistles or deer fences to deter deer from crossing roads in front of you. Stay alert.

**Talking Points**

Early November is the peak time for deer-vehicle crashes as deer are in their mating season and become more active.

Deer crashes have decreased in the past decade, but only due to the fact that many are not reported. DPS estimates that only about one-third of deer crashes are reported. In the 1990s, the state averaged around 6,000 deer crashes each year. In 2011, there were 2,426 reported deer crashes and, in 2020, this number dropped to 1,112.

The main rule when driving is don’t veer for deer; do not swerve when you encounter a deer. It is safer to brake and hit a deer than swerve into oncoming traffic or off the road.

Motorcyclists most often pay the price in deer crashes as they don’t have the protective cage motorists do. Riders should only ride during daylight hours and avoid roads and areas that are likely to have high deer activity. A rider’s best response when encountering a deer is to slow down quickly and then drive carefully around the animal at low speed. Riders are encouraged to wear helmets and other high-visibility protective gear to prevent injury or death in a crash.

Watch for deer during dawn and dusk – when most deer-vehicle crashes occur. A key to preventing these crashes are to pay attention and drive at safe speeds.

Watch for the reflection of deer eyes and for deer silhouettes on the shoulder of the road. If anything looks slightly suspicious, slow down.

Remember, deer do unpredictable things. Sometimes, they stop in the middle of the road when crossing. They will occasionally cross and quickly re-cross back from where they came and other times they move toward an approaching vehicle.

When encountering a deer, slow down, and blow your horn to urge the deer to leave the road. Stop if the deer stays on the road and don’t try to go around it.

If you see one deer, watch for more – deer are herd animals and frequently move in groups.

If you hit a deer, call 911 or your local law enforcement agency.