

Traffic Safety

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Avoid deer-vehicle collisions

On your early morning drive to work, a deer pokes its head out from the trees along the roadside. The actions you take next will determine not only your own safety, but that of the animal and possibly other motorists.

Around 1.5 million deer-vehicle collisions occur annually on the nation's roads, estimates the Humane Society of the United States.

How can you avoid becoming part of that statistic?

Know when they're active. Although some are on the move at night, deer are most active at dawn and dusk, said Moriah Boggess, a deer biologist with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife. When it comes to collisions, however, the most dangerous time on the road is during the deer breeding season. The timing varies by region. In the Midwest and along the East Coast, breeding takes place from mid-October through the end of November.

Know they roam together. If you see a deer near the road, more are likely to follow. Deer don't travel alone. "Often-times, a motorist will hit a deer after they've seen another," Boggess said. "Deer are often confused. They don't necessarily understand the direction of travel or what's happening on that road. They're prone to quick movements and maybe running in a new direction because they're frightened."

Watch your speed. Speed is a major factor in deer-vehicle collisions. When you're driving during peak movement times of the day or season, slow down.

Steer or swerve? When it comes to the decision to steer or swerve to avoid

hitting a deer, one option is much safer than the other: steering. In her experience patrolling Michigan's roadways, Michigan State Police Sgt. Kim Vetter has found that more fatalities occur when drivers swerve off the road. Vetter's advice? "Steer through the collision. The deer will move and might not survive, unfortunately. If you swerve and hit a tree, the tree doesn't move."

Know how to react. You may have heard that honking your horn, flashing your lights or using deer whistles attached to your front bumper will help deter deer from running onto the road. Boggess and Vetter agree that none of those is a trusted method.

Boggess said the most promising research focuses on the use of rear-facing LED bars, which light up the entire front of your vehicle during low-light conditions, making it more visible to deer. The device can be used in addition to headlights, which deer often don't see well.



NEWS BRIEFS

FMCSA: States have 60 days to downgrade licenses of CMV drivers with drug, alcohol violations

WASHINGTON — State driver’s licensing agencies will have 60 days to initiate mandatory downgrades of commercial driver’s licenses and commercial learner’s permits once notified that a commercial motor vehicle operator has failed a drug or alcohol test, under a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration final rule that, at press time, was set to go into effect Nov. 8.

FMCSA contends that the rule plugs both a “knowledge gap” and “loophole” in present regulations, which prohibit SDLAs from issuing, renewing, upgrading and transferring CDLs or CLPs for drivers who test positive for drugs or alcohol until those drivers complete FMCSA’s return-to-duty process.

“Currently, most SDLAs do not receive drug and alcohol program violation information about CDL or CLP holders licensed in their state,” the rule says. “Therefore, these SDLAs are unaware when a CMV operator is subject to the driving prohibition ... and the CMV operator continues to hold a valid CDL or CLP despite the driving prohibition.”

SDLAs are required to consult FMCSA’s online Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse, which provides real-time national data on CMV drivers who have failed drug and alcohol tests, before issuing or renewing licenses.

They will have until Nov. 18, 2024, to comply with the new rule.

Senate committee advances nominations of Meera Joshi, Amit Bose to lead FMCSA, FRA

WASHINGTON — Meera Joshi’s nomination to lead the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration moved closer to a Senate confirmation with a 22-6 vote by the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee on Oct. 20.

The committee also approved Amit Bose’s nomination for administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration in a voice vote.

Joshi was appointed deputy administrator and senior official of FMCSA on Inauguration Day. The agency hasn’t had a Senate-confirmed leader since Raymond Martinez resigned in October 2019. Jim Mullen and Wiley Deck served as acting FMCSA administrators after Martinez’s resignation.

Previously, Joshi served as chair and CEO of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission. “She spearheaded novel Vision Zero campaigns using data tools to keep high-risk drivers and unsafe vehicles off the road,” a White House press release states. “She also led landmark policy, including establishing robust open transportation data standards for app-based providers, enacting the nation’s first for-hire driver pay protection program and providing broad access to for-hire transportation for passengers who use wheelchairs.”



Joshi



Bose

Bose is the deputy administrator of FRA, for which he previously served as chief counsel and senior advisor. He also served as associate general counsel and deputy assistant secretary for governmental affairs at the Department of Transportation during the Obama administration.

Speeding most frequently cited violation during Operation Safe Driver Week

GREENBELT, MD — Law enforcement officials issued more than 27,000 citations and warnings to drivers during the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance’s annual Operation Safe Driver Week.

From July 11 to July 17, law enforcement officials throughout North America remained on the lookout for passenger and commercial motor vehicle drivers engaging in unsafe behaviors.

Citations and warnings related to speeding were most common among both groups of drivers. CMV drivers received 1,690 citations and 2,549 warnings for speeding. Passenger vehicle drivers were assessed 9,349 citations and 2,929 warnings related to speeding.

The next most common citations issued to CMV drivers were failure to wear a seat belt (1,225), failure to obey traffic control device (522), texting/using a handheld phone (344) and improper lane change (112).

Among passenger vehicle drivers, the next most common citations were failure to wear a seat belt (1,355), distracted driving/using a handheld phone (573), possession/use/under influence of alcohol or drugs (428), and failure to obey a traffic control device (336).

STATISTICS

July traffic deaths down 4%

By Kenneth Kolosh

With travel returning to normal levels nationwide, the number of miles driven in July increased 11.5% compared with the same month last year, but was still down 0.9% from 2019 (pre-pandemic normal). Because of COVID-19-related impacts, the number of miles driven last year decreased 13.2% compared with 2019.

Motor vehicle-related deaths for the first seven months of 2021 totaled 25,320 – up 13% compared with 2020 and up 16% compared with 2019. Motor vehicle-related deaths this past July totaled 3,860 – down 4% from the previous June, but still up 9% compared with June 2019. After a flat June, July is the first month since February to show a year-over-year decrease. The decrease in deaths in July was accompanied by a large increase in miles driven compared with July 2020, resulting in a monthly mileage death rate decrease of 14%. The mileage death rate per 100 million vehicle miles driven for July 2021 is 1.3 – down from 1.6 last year and up from 1.2 in 2019.

Notes to table

Deaths are reported by state traffic authorities. All figures are preliminary. To ensure proper comparisons, 2019 and 2020 figures cover the same reporting period as those for 2021. The total for 2019 is from the National Center for Health Statistics. States shown in color had fewer deaths in 2021 than they did in 2020 for the same reporting period.

STATE MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS, CHANGES AND RATES UNITED STATES, SEVEN MONTHS, 2019-2021

STATE	NO. OF MONTHS	DEATHS IDENTICAL PERIODS			PERCENT CHANGES	
		2021	2020	2019	2020 TO 2021	2019 TO 2021
TOTAL U.S.	7	25,320	22,500	21,911	13%	16%
Alabama	7	582	503	521	16%	12%
Alaska	7	33	34	40	-3%	-18%
Arizona	7	674	535	588	26%	15%
Arkansas	7	369	362	283	2%	30%
California	7	2,319	1,818	1,886	28%	23%
Colorado	7	358	321	318	12%	13%
Connecticut	7	181	171	130	6%	39%
Delaware	7	65	60	61	8%	7%
District of Columbia	7	25	19	14	32%	79%
Florida	7	2,054	1,970	1,987	4%	3%
Georgia	7	952	862	863	10%	10%
Hawaii	7	52	52	67	0%	-22%
Idaho	7	139	99	124	40%	12%
Illinois	7	663	548	536	21%	24%
Indiana	7	498	473	454	5%	10%
Iowa	7	180	159	181	13%	-1%
Kansas	7	212	245	249	-13%	-15%
Kentucky	7	443	417	419	6%	6%
Louisiana	7	531	460	403	15%	32%
Maine	7	73	84	104	-13%	-30%
Maryland	7	282	271	271	4%	4%
Massachusetts	7	210	187	194	12%	8%
Michigan	7	632	557	530	13%	19%
Minnesota	7	256	204	186	25%	38%
Mississippi	7	400	377	345	6%	16%
Missouri	7	559	554	470	1%	19%
Montana	7	135	106	101	27%	34%
Nebraska	7	121	129	128	-6%	-5%
Nevada	7	206	157	149	31%	38%
New Hampshire	7	60	57	60	5%	0%
New Jersey	7	332	297	295	12%	13%
New Mexico	7	259	226	241	15%	7%
New York	7	507	443	442	14%	15%
North Carolina	7	966	895	824	8%	17%
North Dakota	7	60	51	61	18%	-2%
Ohio	7	745	646	610	15%	22%
Oklahoma	7	384	341	333	13%	15%
Oregon	7	318	229	258	39%	23%
Pennsylvania	7	634	647	657	-2%	-4%
Rhode Island	7	38	39	33	-3%	15%
South Carolina	7	631	545	556	16%	13%
South Dakota	7	82	59	43	39%	91%
Tennessee	7	768	634	632	21%	22%
Texas	7	2,457	2,100	2,033	17%	21%
Utah	7	174	147	124	18%	40%
Vermont	7	34	35	13	-3%	162%
Virginia	7	511	465	443	10%	15%
Washington	7	311	288	295	8%	5%
West Virginia	7	149	142	137	5%	9%
Wisconsin	7	301	313	283	-4%	6%
Wyoming	7	59	59	96	0%	-39%

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DRIVING TIP

Data-driven decision-making

The mounds of data generated by your company's fleet operations is useless unless it's analyzed regularly. This information should be used to make decisions that will improve your motor vehicle safety program policies and prevent crashes, says the NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety.

"Similarly, the collection of information on incidents and identification of factors that contribute to crashes will give your company an opportunity to learn what went wrong and make changes to prevent similar events in the future," CMVS says.

The center offers the following tips to help employers make data-driven decisions regarding their safety program.

- Use data sources such as crash and claims data; drivers' personnel, training and driving performance records; motor vehicle record checks; vehicle use and maintenance records; in-vehicle monitoring systems data; workers' compensation claims; incident and near-miss reports; and incident investigations.

- Hire workers with the skills needed to manage and analyze the data.
- Use complete and accurate data to calculate your key performance indicators.
- Conduct periodic data-driven audits of the motor vehicle safety program.
- Determine which types of incidents need to be reported. Best practice is to require reporting of all incidents.
- Provide clear, detailed instructions about what to do.
- Require drivers to keep emergency equipment in the vehicle (reflective triangles, first aid kit).
- Set up a review process for all incidents that meet a pre-set threshold of severity.
- Compile all relevant information, including the incident reporting form filled out by the driver, reports from law enforcement or insurance investigators, and witness statements.
- Identify factors before, during and after the incident that contributed to its occurrence and severity.
- Determine corrective actions to be taken and document that they've been completed.