

Message from WisDOT Secretary Mark Gottlieb

We are very encouraged by the fact that the state ended 2014 with the lowest number of traffic deaths, and the first time fatalities were below 500, since 1943. We certainly cannot be complacent about our continuing efforts to prevent traffic deaths and injuries. In Wisconsin, on average, more than one person per day is killed in a crash and more than 100 are injured. Traffic fatalities are more than just numbers and statistics. Each number was a person whose tragic death was mourned by family and friends. And we know that most traffic deaths could have been prevented if motorists had only slowed down, paid attention, driven sober and buckled up. Let's all work together in the coming year to do everything we can to reach the ultimate goal of zero preventable traffic deaths in Wisconsin.

2014 had the lowest number of traffic deaths in 71 years

Wisconsin ended 2014 with 492 traffic fatalities, which was the lowest number of deaths and the first time below 500 fatalities since 1943 when 417 people in died in crashes, according to preliminary statistics from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT).

State traffic deaths in 2014 also were down 35 (approximately a 7 percent reduction) from 2013 when 527 people died.

David Pabst, director of the WisDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety, noted several factors that contributed to the reduction in traffic deaths.

He pointed out that safety belt use in Wisconsin reached an all-time high in 2014 with nearly 85 percent of drivers and passengers buckling up. However, Wisconsin's safety belt use rate still lags behind the national average of 87 percent and is below neighboring states all of which have safety belt use rates of more than 90 percent.

Although the figures for alcohol-related fatal crashes in 2014 won't be available for a few months, Pabst says, "Deaths due to alcohol-related crashes in Wisconsin have declined dramatically in the past 10 years from 348 fatalities in 2003 to 185 in 2013, which is a 47 percent reduction."



To combat drunken driving, law enforcement agencies around the state have formed Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) Task Forces using federal funding administered by WisDOT. Currently, 16 OWI Task Forces are operating in urban and rural communities.

To prevent speed-related crashes on major highways, the State Patrol Air Support Unit flew 88 traffic enforcement missions last year. WisDOT used Twitter to advise drivers of the time and locations of the aerial enforcement missions to increase voluntary compliance with speed limits and other traffic laws.

"Another major traffic safety improvement last year was the reduction in motorcyclists' fatalities," Pabst said. "There were 74 motorcyclists killed in crashes last year, which was the lowest number since 2001, when 72 motorcyclists died in crashes. The 2014 riding season was shorter than normal because of a cold spring. But efforts to improve motorcycle safety through rider education and training also contributed to the drop in fatalities. About 35 percent of motorcyclists' fatalities from 2003 to 2013 involved riders who had not completed the safety training or skills test required to obtain a motorcycle license, so we must continue our efforts to get more motorcyclists trained and properly licensed."

In addition to improved driving behavior, engineering had a significant role in saving lives. "Engineering advancements have made the vehicles we drive and the roads we drive on much safer," Pabst said.

Upcoming statewide traffic safety mobilizations:

- Click It or Ticket safety belt mobilization
May 18 to 31, 2015
- Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over crackdown on drunken driving
August 21 to September 7, 2015
- Booze and Belts traffic safety campaign
mid-December

Who's who at WisDOT

Paul Hammer was recently named deputy secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). In this role, he serves as the chief operating officer for the department. Paul has been a WisDOT employee since 2000 and previously served as Director of the Office of Policy, Finance and Improvement. Prior to WisDOT, he held positions at the Wisconsin Department of Administration and Legislative Audit Bureau. Paul has a bachelor of arts in political science from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and received a master of arts in public affairs from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.





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