



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2011
October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011

**EXECUTIVE
OVERVIEW**



CHRIS CHRISTIE • GOVERNOR

SAFE PASSAGE

moving toward zero fatalities

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Federal law requires the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety (DHTS) to develop and implement an annual Highway Safety Plan (HSP) that addresses the primary causes of motor vehicle-related crashes and the resulting injuries, deaths and property damage on the state's roadways. Two crash data sources were used in the development of the 2011 plan: the New Jersey Crash Records system maintained by the New Jersey Department of Transportation's Bureau of Safety Programs and the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) maintained by the New Jersey State Police. In addition, DHTS once again partnered with the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) to determine seat belt usage rates in all seating positions, and Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind poll to assess motorist behavior and their opinions about safety-related initiatives.

The 2011 HSP builds upon the previous year's plan goal of ensuring "Safe Passage" for all roadway users – motorists (including truck and motorcycle operators) and their passengers, as well as bicyclists and pedestrians. Achieving this goal requires DHTS and its many public and private sector partners to focus their resources on crash prevention with an emphasis on "moving toward zero fatalities." The HSP identifies the key crash causation factors and outlines the proven countermeasures – education, engineering, enforcement, and emergency services – that will be used to attain this goal.

NEW JERSEY'S CRASH PROBLEM

Motor vehicle-related fatalities in New Jersey decreased for the third consecutive year from 724 in 2007 and 590 in 2008 to 583 last year. This represents an overall 3-year decline of 19% and the lowest number of recorded deaths in the state since the 1940s. Car drivers continued to represent the greatest number of fatalities (249 or 43%), while passengers accounted for 98 deaths, a 10% decline over the previous year. The state also experienced a significant decline in bicycle and motorcycle-related fatalities, falling from 20 to 14 (30% decrease) and 85 to 65 (23% decrease), respectively, between 2008 and 2009. After a two-year decline, however, pedestrian fatalities (157) increased in 2009 accounting for nearly 27% of all fatalities statewide, more than double the national average. Meanwhile, the state's motor-vehicle related injuries continued to decline in 2009, maintaining a 6-year downward trend of 18%.

While no county is immune from traffic crashes, suburban Ocean (63) had the greatest number of fatalities, followed by Burlington (48) and Middlesex (48). Pedestrian fatalities were most prevalent in Essex (20), Middlesex (18) and Ocean (18) Counties (representing one third of all pedestrian fatalities statewide), while nearly 80% of all pedestrian injuries occurred in 10 urban/suburban counties. Bicycle fatalities occurred most often in Ocean (4) and Monmouth (3) Counties, while approximately 14% of the state's motorcycle fatalities occurred in Burlington County (9).

What's causing traffic crashes in the Garden State? Speed/aggressive driving, alcohol and drug impairment, inexperience, and distraction are some of the most significant contributing factors. The HSP takes into consideration the following key 2009 crash data analysis findings:

KEY 2009 NEW JERSEY CRASH DATA ANALYSIS FINDINGS

- While New Jersey's front seat belt usage rate rose for the 14th consecutive year to 93.7% in 2009 (approximately 100,000 more motor vehicle occupants are buckling up), back seat belt usage by adults fell from 32% in 2008 to 27% in 2009 (47% when children are included). Nearly half of the motor vehicle occupants killed in crashes between 1999 and 2009 were unrestrained.
- Young drivers (16-20) involved in crashes fell 22 percent in 2009, while fatalities continued to decline from 72 in 2006 to 44 last year (a 38% decrease). Teen drivers, however, have the highest crash risk of any age group on the road. Driver inattention/distraction, followed by speed and failure to yield continue to be the most prevalent contributing factors in young driver crashes.
- Bicycle fatalities dropped by 30% last year, after a troubling spike in 2008. Unsafe riding behaviors, including riding against rather than with traffic and lack of visibility, continue to be contributing factors in crashes.
- Pedestrian fatalities increased, after a 2-year decline, and accounted for nearly 27% of all traffic fatalities statewide. While children, senior citizens and immigrants are high-risk pedestrian groups, adult males between 40 and 59 years of age accounted for the greatest number of pedestrians killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2009.
- Older driver fatalities have decreased by more than 50% since 2001 (mirroring a national trend), with the lowest number (72) occurring in 2009. Helping older adults drive as long as safely possible is critical as the state's population continues to age.
- Motorcycle fatalities declined by 23% in 2009 after trending upward the previous three years. However, motorcyclist deaths continue to account for more than 10% of all roadway fatalities, despite motorcycles representing just 2% of the registered vehicles in the state. Unhelmeted riders killed in crashes continued to trend upward despite a state mandate requiring helmet use.
- Alcohol and drug-related fatalities dropped by 26% since 2007, but continue to account for a quarter of all roadway deaths. Alcohol-related crashes and fatalities involving drivers under 21 have declined significantly, however, the use of drugs by young drivers is on the rise.
- Hand-held cell phone use by drivers continues to trend downward, but texting while driving jumped 20% between 2008 and 2009. While drivers under 30 years of age are more likely than any other age group to text and drive, this increase in texting behind the wheel can be attributed to those 30-44 and 45-60 years of age, with 37% and 17%, respectively, admitting to the practice. In addition, 79% of motorists (up 9% in 2009) believe, despite research showing otherwise, that talking on a hand-held cell phone is more dangerous than talking hands-free.
- Speed-related crashes increased approximately 3% after falling slightly between 2008-2009. Aggressive driving continues to be cited as one of the "biggest threats to safety on the road."

PLAN EMPHASIS AREAS

The HSP outlines how \$11 million in federal funds will be used to address the state's most pressing traffic safety problems. Emphasis areas include: occupant protection (safety belts and child seats); speeding/aggressive, impaired (alcohol and drugs) and distracted driving; pedestrian, bicycle and motorcycle safety; and young and older drivers. The plan also provides continued support for the state's traffic crash records management system and emergency medical services.

DHTS will continue its statewide public education and/or enforcement programs including: *Click It or Ticket/100% Buckle Up* (seat belt and car seat use with a strong emphasis on back seat restraint), *Over the Limit, Under Arrest* (impaired driving), *Hang Up, Just Drive* (distracted driving), *Obey the Signs or Pay the Fines* (speeding/aggressive driving), *Shared Responsibility/Pedestrian Decoy Program* (pedestrian safety), *Ice and Snow, Remove It Before You Go* (winter vehicle maintenance), *Move Over!* (sharing the road with emergency vehicles), and *Don't Drive Stupid* and *Got Your Decal?* (teen driving). County-wide and local traffic safety programs, with clearly defined performance goals and measures, led by Community Traffic Safety Programs (CTSPs), municipal and county agencies, and statewide non-profits, including AAA and the Transportation Management Associations, are also earmarked for funding in the 2011 HSP.

The countermeasures outlined in the HSP can positively impact safety. However, key public policy initiatives are essential for stemming the tide of crashes in New Jersey. DHTS, working with the Teen Driver Safety Coalition, will continue to call for passage of the "permit" bill, which would mandate participation in a parent/teen orientation as a pre-requisite for obtaining a permit, lengthen the permit from 6 to 12 months, and require teens log a minimum number of practice hours – all essential recommendations outlined in the March 2008 Teen Driver Study Commission report. Additionally, DHTS will continue its partnership with the Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) and the New Jersey Brain Injury Association to educate teens and their parents about recent changes to the state's Graduated Driver License (GDL) law.

GOING FORWARD

Recognizing that zero is DHTS' bottom line, the 2011 HSP (like its 2010 counterpart) sets targets, by region of the state (Northern, Central and Southern), for moving toward zero fatalities with a goal of reducing fatalities by a minimum of 1% between 2009 and 2010. DHTS has, over the past 12 months, branded all of its initiatives with the "Safe Passage... moving toward zero fatalities" message and has seen an up tick in the number of grantees and safety partners following its lead. Through consistent messaging, DHTS can convey to the public that one crash, one injury, one death, is simply one too many.

See the complete New Jersey Highway Safety Plan FY 2011 for detailed information.