



Motor Vehicle Crashes

A Leading Cause of Death in Younger People

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among those aged 5-34 in the United States. More than 2.3 million adult drivers and passengers were treated in emergency departments as the result of being injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2009. The economic impact is also notable: the lifetime costs of crash-related deaths and injuries among drivers and passengers were \$70 billion in 2005.

According to state health officials, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Connecticut residents between the ages of 5 and 24 years, responsible for more than 26% of all deaths in this age group. Among Connecticut's 15 to 19 year olds, motor vehicle crashes cause 30% of all deaths.

Between 2005 and 2007, there were 891 Connecticut residents who died in motor vehicle crashes, including motor vehicle occupants, motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians. Motor vehicle crashes also resulted in 7,168 hospital stays, 128,565 emergency room visits and over \$257 million in direct hospital charges.

Many of these deaths and non-fatal injuries can be prevented. The Department of Public Health recommends the following important steps to protect yourself, your family and community:

- Wear a seat belt on every trip.
- Make sure children ride in properly installed and used car seats or booster seats appropriate for their size and age. For a fitting station near you, visit <http://www.ctsafekids.org/fittingstations.htm>.
- Wear bicycle and motorcycle helmets.
- Avoid using electronic devices or doing other activities in the car that distracts you from driving.
- Don't drink and drive or let others drive after drinking.
- Walk facing traffic and wear highly visible reflective clothing if walking at night.

Parents can make a major difference in keeping their teenagers safe by discussing the rules of the road, creating a parent-teen safe driving contract, monitoring their teen's driving, and learning and enforcing Connecticut's teen driving laws, which include restrictions on two of the most risky situations for young drivers; driving at night and driving with other teen passengers.

During National Public Health Week, April 4-10, 2011, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is focusing attention on preventing injuries, a leading cause of death and disability for Connecticut residents. The DPH Injury Prevention Program analyzes injury data, provides information and works with a variety of public and private partners on reducing and preventing injuries.

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