Decline in Crash Risk Spurs Better Outlook for Older Drivers

**STATUS REPORT, VOL. 50, NO. 2 | MARCH 3, 2015**

Older drivers are more likely to crash for every mile they travel than middle-age drivers, but the overall crash outlook for older drivers has markedly improved during the past two decades. Two developments are helping lower the fatality rate among drivers age 75 and older: They are involved in fewer crashes per mile traveled, and they are surviving side impacts more often than prior generations, a new IIHS study indicates.

Prior IIHS studies have shown that older drivers have enjoyed bigger declines in fatal crash rates per licensed driver and per vehicle mile traveled than middle-age drivers since the mid-1990s. Researchers surmised then that the improvements were likely due in large part to a combination of safer vehicles and the fact that older adults are generally healthier and less fragile than prior generations.

The latest research delves further into the characteristics of the declines in older driver death rates. Using information from federal databases of fatal and police-reported crashes and of vehicle miles traveled, IIHS researchers examined how fatality rates per vehicle miles traveled for drivers age 75 and older compare with those of middle-age drivers ages 35-54 and quantified how changes in crash involvement (crash risk) and older driver survivability (death risk) contributed to changes in fatality rates from 1995-98 to 2005-08.

CLICK TO CONTINUE ON PAGE 3
Creating New Mexico’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan

Numerous representatives gathered on March 24, 2015, at the Embassy Suites in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in efforts to form New Mexico’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The SHSP is a comprehensive strategy, which integrates engineering, education, enforcement, and emergency medical services to establish statewide goals and objectives, establish safety Emphasis Areas, and provide performance measures for those objectives.

The SHSP, formerly known as the Comprehensive Transportation Safety Plan, is developed by the New Mexico Project Team, in cooperation with various safety partners. To determine necessary Emphasis Areas, data, crash trends, and feedback from safety stakeholders, are analyzed; then, data from each designated Emphasis Area is gathered and applied to develop strategies and countermeasures that address each area of concern. The final goal of the SHSP is to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on all of New Mexico’s public roads.

This year, the Emphasis Areas of interest included: Animal Wildlife, Bicycles, Distracted Driving, Emergency Medical Services, Heavy Vehicles, Impaired Driving, Motorcycles, Older Drivers, Pedestrians, Safety Restraints, Sleepy/Fatigued Drivers, Aggressive Speeding, Younger Drivers, Tribal Strategies, and more. The objectives for these emphasis areas included: planning for an aging population; adopting guidelines for bicycle safety programs and strategies; and increasing public awareness of distracted driving.

Buckle Up Jump-Starts a New Year of Child Passenger Safety

The annual Buckle Up New Mexico (BUNM) Recertification Training was held on March 11-12, 2015, at the Sandia Resort. The event gathers representatives from healthcare, law enforcement, and other public service organizations from around the State, who work to promote child passenger safety in New Mexico. As the second largest training conference of its kind in the Nation, BUNM offers Child Passenger Safety Technicians the opportunity to earn continuing education units, needed for recertification. This year’s training topics included advancements in child passenger safety technology, updates and instruction from child safety seat manufacturers, best practices for proper child safety seat use, and LATCH manual practical exercises.

According to the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) Cabinet Secretary Tom Church, motor vehicle crashes remain the number one cause of childhood death in the Nation; yet, three out of four child safety seats are still used improperly every day. In order to effectively impact these statistics in New Mexico, various programs have been implemented and promoted by the NMDOT Traffic Safety Division in partnership with Safer New Mexico Now (Safer).

Thanks to these programs, there are 411 currently-certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians in over 50 cities throughout New Mexico, offering families access to personal instruction on the proper selection, installation, and use of child safety seats. Last year, more than 1,500 child safety seats were inspected by certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians at Statewide Child Safety Seat Fitting Stations and Clinics, with more than 500 of those seats being deemed unsafe and replaced. Additionally, the New Mexico Child Safety Seat Distribution Program, reaches over 92% of the State’s population through partnerships with health and social service agencies, to provide these services to low-income families across the State. Last year, alone, more than 2,000 seats were distributed to New Mexico’s low-income families.

Numerous individuals and organizations were recognized for their exceptional dedication to child passenger safety in New Mexico. Among these recipients were Kohl’s, Molina Healthcare of New Mexico, Ben Archer Health Center, Luna County Parents as Teachers program, Senior Technician Jeremy Manzanares, and other Child Passenger Safety Technicians who went above and beyond to serve New Mexico’s families. Safer’s own Chairman, Ann Rhoades, was presented with the first ever H.J. “Doc” and Lena Weiler Community Leadership Award for her tremendous impact on New Mexico and its families.

Bicycle Safety Tips for Motorists

Courtesy of Yield to Life

1) DIFFERENT BUT EQUAL: In all states, cyclists are deemed by law to be drivers of vehicles and are entitled to the same rights on the road as motorists. Expect cyclists on the road. Watch for cyclists on the road. Treat them as you would any slow-moving vehicle.
The one-week NMLET Standardized Field Sobriety Testing Instructor (SFSTI) Train-the-Trainer course was held on February 2 – 6, in Albuquerque, NM. The course was attended by 15 officers, representing eight federal, state, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies.

Since February 2013, the NMLET has held five SFSTI Train-the-Trainer courses, certifying 105 new SFSTIs. A total of 49 federal, state, tribal, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies, as well as all five New Mexico Department of Transportation districts, have been represented through these trainings. The next SFSTI Train-the-Trainer course will be held in Las Cruces, NM, from August 10 – 14, 2015.

Additionally, on February 27, 2015, the first in a series of three Traffic Crash Investigation courses was held in Las Cruces, NM. The NMLET, in coordination with the Institute of Police Technology and Management (IPTM), have partnered with the IPTM instructional team to bring a blend of practical law enforcement skills, years of police training experience, and quality academic credentials to meet the demands of today’s society.

For information about these trainings or other trainings offered by the NMLET please visit www.safernm.org or contact the training coordinator at NMLET@safernm.org.

Decline in Crash Risk Spurs Better Outlook for Older Drivers

Compared with drivers ages 35-54, those age 75 and older experienced large declines in crash risk (police-reported crash involvements per mile traveled) and modest declines in death risk (driver deaths per police-reported crash involvement) from 1995-98 to 2005-08. Among drivers ages 75-79, crash risk declined 22 percent and death risk fell 11 percent relative to middle-age drivers. Among drivers 80 and older, crash risk dropped 31 percent and death risk fell 12 percent relative to middle-age drivers.

Drops in crash risk accounted for 68 percent and 74 percent, respectively, of the relative decline in fatalities per vehicle mile traveled among drivers 75-79 and 80 and older compared with middle-age drivers.

Many factors may have contributed to the large drop in crash risk among older drivers. One is that older adults are logging more miles than ever before. Average annual vehicle miles traveled per driver rose 60 percent for drivers 75-79 and 51 percent for drivers age 80 and older from 1995-06 to 2008. This suggests that the percentage of low-mileage drivers may have declined during the period. Low-mileage drivers tend to have higher crash rates per vehicle mile traveled, possibly because they tend to drive a larger proportion of miles on local roads with more conflict points or because they have physical or cognitive impairments that have led them to self-limit their driving.

In the IIHS study, declines in death risk among drivers age 75 and older, relative to middle-age drivers, were much larger in side crashes than in front crashes (18 percent versus 5 percent). “This is a good example of how changes in vehicle safety initiated many years ago are affecting crash outcomes today,” says Jessica Cicchino, a senior research scientist at IIHS and the study’s author. “Improvements in side impact protection are helping older drivers walk away from crashes that might have killed their parents or grandparents.”

Airbags designed to deploy in side crashes and certain offset frontal ones have been standard on the majority of new vehicles since the 2008 model year. There is evidence that side airbags are more effective in preventing fatalities among front-seat occupants ages 70-96 than among those ages 13-49, while front airbags have equally benefited both demographics.

Older drivers also appear to be benefiting from vehicle designs that minimize the harm larger, heavier vehicles can inflict on smaller, lighter ones in crashes.

“Safer vehicles are leveling the playing field, but older adults’ fragility is still a big threat when it comes to surviving crashes, especially for drivers 75 and older. That physical vulnerability continues to be the leading contributor to older drivers’ fatality rates,” Cicchino says.

Fragility accounted for 77 percent of the elevated fatality rates for drivers ages 75-79 and 68 percent for drivers 80 and older relative to middle-age drivers during 2005-08, the study found.
NM kicks off campaign against distracted driving

Texting while driving a primary danger
By Rick Nathanson, Albuquerque Journal

Distracted driving is impaired driving and, if you’re texting, you’re not driving.

Those were the messages conveyed over and over during the Friday morning Civic Plaza kickoff of the “U Drive, U Text, U Pay” campaign.

The statewide awareness campaign, which runs through April 15 is being funded by a $200,000 grant from the New Mexico Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and is partnering with law enforcement agencies around the state.

Noting that April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry said there have been incidents from coast to coast in which “distracted driving has caused tragedies.” These incidents, he said, “can all be prevented.”

If people are still not getting the message about the dangers of texting and driving, Berry said, they may hear it loud and clear “if they get stopped and get a ticket, and it costs them something out of their wallet.”

Under state law, it is illegal to text message while driving. First time violators face a fine of $25, but municipalities have enacted anti driving and texting ordinances that often have stiffer fines. In Albuquerque, a first-time fine is $100.

During the campaign, law enforcement officers will step up their efforts to spot violators, pull them over and ticket them. (Driving while talking on a cellphone with a hands-free device, or using a GPS device are both legal in New Mexico). CLICK TO CONTINUE ON PAGE 6

New Mexico is 2nd-deadliest state for bicyclists
By Olivier Uyttebrouck, Albuquerque Journal

New Mexico is the nation’s second-deadliest state for bicyclists, for reasons ranging from the state’s high rates of substance abuse to a lack of designated bike lanes, officials said.

The number of cyclist deaths per capita for New Mexico is second only to that of Florida in 2010-12, and 50 percent higher than the U.S. rate in that period, the New Mexico Department of Health said in a recent report.

The report does not say how many deaths occurred during that period, but it does say 36 cyclists were killed in New Mexico from 2009 to 2013.

In 2013, seven New Mexico cyclists were killed, 89 were hospitalized and 1,684 were treated for injuries at hospital emergency departments and released, according to the report.

Cycling injuries are in line with the state’s high rate of injuries of all kinds, said Dr. Michael Landen, the state’s epidemiologist.

“New Mexico is a more dangerous state for most injuries,” Landen said. “We have higher rates of motor vehicle deaths and crashes than the nation as a whole.”

The state struggles with high rates of drug and alcohol abuse, which contributes to high rates of traffic accidents, Landen said. The report did not include data about substance abusers involved in cycling accidents.

A report published last year by the Mid-Region Council of Governments found that crashes involving alcohol are more likely to result in fatalities, both for pedestrians and cyclists.

Many New Mexico communities lack designated bike lanes and other street improvements that can improve biking safety, he said.

“We need more of that infrastructure to protect cyclists,” Landen said. “That costs money. Some communities are doing it, but others haven’t gotten there yet.”

Jennifer Buntz, president of the Duke city Wheelmen, a bicycling advocacy group, said better driver education and stricter enforcement of traffic laws are needed to improve bicycling safety.

Buntz served on a committee formed by the Legislature in 2013 that recommended changes to the state driver’s license manual intended to improve drivers’ understanding of bicycling and motorcycle traffic rules. CLICK TO CONTINUE ON PAGE 6
### April

**National Distracted Driving Awareness Month**
**Alcohol Awareness Month**

- **March 30**  Advanced Traffic Crash Investigations, Training, LAS CRUCES

- **April 4**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, LAS CRUCES
  11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
  Morning Star Methodist Church
  2941 Morning Star Drive

- **April 15**  Selective Traffic Enforcement Program
  Training, AZTEC

- **April 16**  Transportation Commission Meeting - SILVER CITY

- **April 22**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, CLAYTON
  10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  National Guard Armory, #1 Chestnut Street

- **April 23**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, SANTA CLARA
  10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  Santa Clara Tribal Office, #1 Kee Street

- **April 25**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, GRANTS
  10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
  Grants High School, 500 Mountain Road

### May

**National Youth Traffic Safety Month**
**Motor Cycle Awareness Month**
**Bicycle Awareness Month**

- **May 1-6**  Mini Superblitz: ENDWI and BKLUP

- **May 5**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, MORA
  10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  Mora Head Start, Highway 518

- **May 8**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, LAGUNA
  2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
  Laguna Early Head Start, Laguna Village/Rio San Jose Street

- **May 9**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, RATON
  10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  K-Mart, 1235 S. 2nd Avenue

- **May 11-22**  Traffic Crash Reconstruction
  Training, LAS CRUCES

- **May 16**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, ALBUQUERQUE
  10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  Lovelace Westside Hospital, 10501 Golf Course Road

- **May 18-31**  Click It or Ticket: Occupant Protection Mobilization

- **May 21**  Transportation Commission Meeting - AZTEC

- **May 27**  SFST Instructor Update Training, LAS CRUCES

- **May 30**  Child Safety Seat Clinic, LAS CRUCES
  10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  Optimist Club of Las Cruces, Field of Dreams Parking Lot

### June

**National Safety Month**

- **June 5**  DWI Checkpoint Training, RIO RANCHO

- **June 6**  Safer New Mexico Now 30th Anniversary
  Child Safety Seat Clinic, ROSWELL
  10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
  Roswell Lovelace Hospital
  117 E. 19th Street

- **June 9-12**  National Child Passenger Safety Certification Training, ALBUQUERQUE

### Bicycle Safety Tips for Motorists

3) **A PASSING GRADE**: Do not pass a cyclist until you can see that you can safely do so. You should allow ample space between your vehicle and the bicycle and make sure you do not place the cyclist in danger.

### Bicycle Safety Tips for Motorists

4) **RESPECT**: Cyclists have a rightful spot on the road. Replace frustration with a smile every time you see a cyclist.

### Fitting Stations

Fitting Stations offer child safety seat inspection appointments during regular hours of operation at nine permanent New Mexico locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamogordo</td>
<td>(505) 439-4300</td>
<td>Third Saturday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque: NE</td>
<td>(505) 856-6143</td>
<td>2nd and 4th Fridays of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque: SW</td>
<td>(505) 856-6143</td>
<td>Third Thursday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque: Central</td>
<td>(505) 272-6024</td>
<td>First Friday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmington:</td>
<td>(800) 231-6145</td>
<td>Third Saturday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Cruces:</td>
<td>(800) 231-6145</td>
<td>First Wednesday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Vegas:</td>
<td>(800) 231-6145</td>
<td>Last Wednesday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Rancho:</td>
<td>(800) 231-6145</td>
<td>First Friday of each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe</td>
<td>(505) 471-3965</td>
<td>2nd and 4th Fridays of each month</td>
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### UPCOMING Events

Due to ongoing updates to the calendar of events, please click here or visit www.safernm.org for the most current list.
New Mexico is 2nd-deadliest state for bicyclists

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and to improve safety. The recommendations have not been included in the driver’s manual, she said.

The recommendations called for at least 5 percent of driver’s license manual and test questions to cover pedestrian, bicycle and motorcycle awareness, as well as related traffic safety rules.

Robert J. Archuleta, Director of the Traffic Safety Division of the state Department of Transportation, said the agency plans to issue a request for proposals for an overhaul of the noncommercial driver’s license manual and driver’s license test and has budgeted $500,000 for the project.

But for now, plans to overhaul the driver’s license manual remain on hold while attorneys for the DOT and the state Motor Vehicle Department work out which agency will issue the RFP and lead the effort, he said.

Archuleta said he hopes the driver’s manual overhaul will move forward this year. Communities can enhance cycling and traffic safety with improvements such as striping, signs and designated bike lanes, Archuleta said.

NM kicks off campaign against distracted driving

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The mayor also encouraged parents and children to open a dialogue about distracted driving and cautioned parents to not engage in this dangerous practice because their children will emulate that behavior.

Putting the danger in perspective, William Roseman, Deputy Chief of the Albuquerque Police Department, said that, if a person is driving at 50 mph and looks down at a cellphone for just one second, “by the time you look back up at the road, you will have traveled over 80 feet.” Extend that distraction to five seconds and “you will have traveled the length of a football field.”

Roughly 60 percent of all accidents in Albuquerque, he said, are the result of “some kind of distracted driving, whether it’s texting, talking to people in the car or reaching back for something.”

Jimmy Glascock, Deputy Chief of the New Mexico State Police, said that distracted driving is the “leading cause of rural highway crashes in New Mexico.” The practice is so prevalent that the State Police, working with law enforcement agencies in the Albuquerque area, conducted an operation recently in which more than 40 citations were issued just for texting and driving.

Of course, distracted driving can also include driving while holding and talking on a cellphone, having a loud animated conversation with others in the vehicle, eating, drinking, smoking, putting on makeup and pretty much any activity that diverts a person’s attention away from the primary task of driving, Glascock said.

“Those engineering changes can make a big difference in the number of deaths you have in a community,” he said.

Albuquerque plans to begin construction this year on a multiuse trail connecting the Nob Hill and Uptown areas called for in Mayor Richard Berry’s “ABQ: The Plan” capital initiative. The goal is to connect the city’s existing trails and bike paths to complete a 50-mile loop around Albuquerque.

Personal behavior and better education about traffic rules also could improve bicycle safety, Archuleta said. Drivers and cyclists all need to obey the same rules, signs, traffic signals and lane markings, he said.

“Drivers need to understand that we need to share the road with bicyclists,” he said. “It needs to be a shared responsibility.”

Bicyclists can improve their chances by using proper safety equipment, the Department of Health report said.

“Bicyclists can prevent injuries and death by wearing a properly fitted helmet,” it said. State law requires children 17 and younger to wear helmets.

The report also urges cyclists to put lights on their bicycles and wear reflective clothing.

Bicycle Safety Tips for Motorists

5) EGRESS ETIQUETTE

After parallel parking, make sure the coast is clear for opening the car door to exit. Make sure there are no cyclists riding alongside your car or fast approaching. By using the rear view mirrors and by turning around, a driver can spot an approaching cyclist and circumvent a disaster.