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Deer-motor vehicle crash numbers continue steady growth in NC



Motor vehicle crashes involving deer peak during the fall months, and the problem of motor vehicle-deer crashes continues to grow in North Carolina. The UNC Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) has recently released a data analysis of these types of crashes for 2006.

While general crash numbers are increasing, the data is showing a decrease in the number of fatal injuries occurring as a result of motor vehicle-deer crashes. In total, 17,236 deer-related crashes occurred in North Carolina, with 3 fatal injury crashes — down from 9 fatal crashes in 2005.

"We were pleased to see a decrease in the number of fatal crashes involving deer in 2006. But motor vehicle-deer crashes are growing in magnitude and tend to be an issue for motorists in North Carolina and many other states in the U.S.," said Eric Rodgman, senior database analyst for HSRC and lead analyst of 2006 deer crash reports. "As in any driving situation, we want to encourage motorists to drive with caution and alertness, especially at those times when deer crashes tend to occur with more frequency."

Deer-vehicle crashes tend to occur most frequently in the months of October, November, and December. These types of crashes are also more likely to occur between the hours of 5 am and 7 am and between 6 pm and midnight. Crashes involving deer comprised 8.5 percent of all reportable crashes in the state in 2006, up 1 percent from 2005.

In a county by county comparison of the data, Wake County topped the list again this year with 964 reported deer crashes. Following behind were Guilford County (602) and Rockingham County (496). The least number of reported crashes were evenly distributed among Swain, Jackson and Graham Counties, each reporting 3 crashes.

The analysis is derived from the narratives of the crash reports submitted by investigating law enforcement officers following deer-vehicle crashes reported to the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles in 2004. Therefore, these figures only reflect the total number of reported deer-related crashes. There is evidence that a great many more of these crashes occur than are reported to law enforcement agencies.

Download complete county-by-county crash data.

The UNC Highway Safety Research Center offers the following tips for lowering your risk of a crash with a deer.

- Reduce your speed in areas with a large deer population and where there are deer warning signs.
- Always wear your seat belt! It's your best protection from injuries in the event of a crash.
- Watch for eyes reflecting in your headlights. Try to look far down the road and scan the roadsides, especially when driving through field edges, heavily wooded areas, or posted deer crossing areas. At night, use your high-beam headlights to increase your sight distance. The sooner you see a deer on or approaching a road, the better your chances of avoiding a crash.
- While a crash involving a deer can happen at any time, be especially careful during the early morning and evening hours and during the months of October, November and December.
- Remember that deer travel in herds. If you see one deer cross the road in front of you, don't assume that all is clear. Deer herds can be fairly large, and the animals often move one right behind the other.
- Do not place confidence in "deer whistles" or other "ultra-sonic" devices that claim to prevent deer collisions.
- Maintain control of your vehicle. If a crash with a deer is inevitable, it is important that you not lose control of your vehicle or veer into the path of an oncoming vehicle to avoid contact with an animal. Loss of control usually results in a more

For more information on animal-vehicle crashes, please visit www.hsrb.unc.edu/safety_info/animal_vehicle/index.cfm.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Intersection Safety Indices completed by HSRC



The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, through research conducted at the UNC Highway Safety Research Center, recently completed the development of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Intersection Safety Indices. These indices are a set of models that enable users to identify intersection crossings and intersection approach legs that should be the greatest priority for undergoing in-depth pedestrian and bicycle safety assessment. Using observable characteristics of an intersection crossing or approach leg, such as number of lanes, area type, presence of bike lane, type of traffic control, and traffic volume, the tool produces a safety index score. Higher scores indicate greater priority for an in-depth safety assessment.

Each leg of an intersection may have different characteristics affecting pedestrian or bicyclist safety. Therefore the tool is intended to provide a rating of the safety of an individual crossing (Ped ISI) or approach leg (Bike ISI) rather than evaluating the intersection as a whole. A practitioner can use the tool to develop a prioritization scheme for a group of pedestrian crossings or bicyclist approaches. This method enables the practitioner to prioritize and proactively address sites that are the most likely to be a safety concern for pedestrians or bicyclists rather than having to wait for analysis following a crash or cluster of crashes at an intersection.

Researchers developed the Ped ISI and Bike ISI tools based on both safety ratings and observed behaviors. The ratings were derived from expert opinions of safety of each site. Behaviors were acquired through observations of interactions between pedestrians or bicyclists and motorists. These measures enabled the researchers to use a multifaceted approach to determine the relative safety of a crossing location for pedestrians or an approach leg for bicyclists.

To develop the Ped ISI and Bike ISI models, researchers studied 68 pedestrian crossings at signalized and unsignalized intersections in Miami, FL, Philadelphia, PA, and San Jose, CA, and 67 bicyclist approaches at signalized and unsignalized intersections in Eugene, OR, Gainesville, FL, Philadelphia, PA, and Portland, OR.

To find out more about the Pedestrian and Bicycle Intersection Safety Indices, please visit: www.tfsrc.gov/safety/pedbike/pubs/06125/.

HSRC produces updates to national Child Passenger Safety training curriculum



Child passenger safety is an important area of highway safety. Each year, over 250 children in North Carolina alone are saved from death or serious injury due to a strong passenger safety law paired with local education and enforcement programs.

As experts in the field of child passenger safety (CPS), HSRC was awarded a contract by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) to produce the updated curriculum used by CPS instructors in training other individuals to become certified CPS technicians.

Child passenger safety certification training classes are conducted by a variety of local, state and national agencies and organizations and are designed to teach individuals the technical and instructional skills needed to serve as child passenger safety resources for their organization, community or state. Those who successfully complete the training workshop are eligible to receive national certification as a Child Passenger Safety Technician through the Safe Kids Worldwide Child Passenger Safety Certification program. Nationwide there are currently 30,000 certified CPS technicians and over 1350 certified instructors.

With the final phase of the project to be completed in early 2008, the project allowed the Center the ability to review the existing curriculum and offer suggestions for technical content and instructional methods, while also serving as a production house for the curriculum by producing the manuals and accompanying presentation slides for the training classes.

The first nationally standardized curriculum for child passenger safety was published by NHTSA in 1997 in collaboration with the National Child Passenger Safety Board, an organization that provides program direction and technical guidance to states, communities and organizations as a means to maintain a credible, standardized child passenger training and certification program.

For more information on Child Passenger Safety training courses, please visit www.cpsboard.org/.

For more information on North Carolina CPS training classes, please visit www.buckupnc.org.

HSRC News Briefs

UNC Highway Safety Research Center honored with two awards

The University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) was recently recognized with two awards — the 2007 Founders' Award from the North Carolina Transportation Hall of Fame (NCTHF), and Outstanding Web site from the Web Marketing Association.

The North Carolina Transportation Hall of Fame was founded in 2003 to recognize and promote past, present and future transportation accomplishments in North Carolina by honoring individuals, agencies, organizations and businesses. The Founder's Award was established a year later to honor excellence in transportation among any mode or field.

Additionally, the Web Marketing Association recently honored HSRC with an Outstanding Web site WebAward for outstanding achievement in Web site development.

The WebAwards is the premier annual Web site award competition that names the best Web sites in 96 industries while setting the standard of excellence for all web site development.

UNC Highway Safety Research Center contributes to the establishment of the Eastern Transportation Knowledge Network

A distinguished group of transportation librarians met at the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) in Chapel Hill and via Web conference to establish the Eastern Transportation Knowledge Network (ETKN).

The network was created to pool resources and expertise in the transportation field in order to provide improved, more efficient library and information services to researchers and consumers by developing a cooperative library partnership across multiple organizations.

Through collaboration and resource sharing, the network aims to reduce individual organization's library operating costs, deliver new and improved services and tools to benefit the transportation community, and to ensure access to and preservation of transportation information products.

As their first project, the group voted to adopt the creation of a Digital Collaboratory of ETKN documents contributed by member libraries, to be accessible through the National Transportation Library. Goals for the Digital Collaboratory include the creation of more full- text electronic content, especially for in-demand transportation monographs and technical reports through a cooperative, selective digitization program.

The meeting was held November 9, and included representatives from the Transportation Research Board, National Transportation Library of the U.S. Department of Transportation, AASHTO, USDOT Volpe Center, Federal Highway Administration, Virginia Transportation Research Council, Transportation Connectivity Pooled Fund, Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network and Departments of Transportation from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts.

For more information on the ETKN, visit <http://ntl.bts.gov/networking/index.html>.

Michigan Department of Transportation receives James L. Oberstar Safe Routes to School Award

The National Center for Safe Routes to School, a federal clearinghouse maintained by the UNC Highway Safety Research Center, awarded the 2007 James L. Oberstar Award to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the exemplary establishment of the Michigan Safe Routes to School Program.

The award is named for Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN) to honor his dedication to America's school children as the pioneer for the National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. Oberstar, current chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, sponsored the federal Safe Routes to School legislation that strives to create safe settings where more parents and children can walk and bicycle to school.

The Michigan SRTS Program demonstrated a number of key program elements that allowed them to lay the groundwork for effective program development. Currently, 60 percent of Michigan's counties have a total of 256 registered schools that are in various stages of completing the planning process to establish SRTS programs. Registered schools then become the pool of applicants for Michigan's SRTS funding and each schools' action plans are the basis for projects for which they request funding. MDOT maintains an open call for applications with no deadline for submittal, allowing each school to proceed at its own pace.

Established in May 2006 through funding from the Federal Highway Administration, the National Center for Safe Routes to School assists communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bicycle to school. The Center strives to equip Safe Routes to School programs with the knowledge and technical information to implement safe and successful strategies.

For more information on the James L. Oberstar Award, please visit www.saferoutesinfo.org/news_room/oberstar_award/.
