

Executive Summary

Introduction



The Maine Transportation Safety Coalition (MTSC) is an independent, non-profit organization created in 1997. The mission of the MTSC is to promote safe transportation in Maine.

In carrying out its mission, the MTSC supports a variety of activities using education, engineering, enforcement and emergency services strategies. The MTSC includes representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), various Departments of state government including the Department of Transportation (DOT); Department of Public Safety/Bureau of Highway Safety and Emergency Medical Services; Office of the Secretary of State/Bureau of Motor Vehicles; Department of Human Services/Bureau of Health; Department of Labor, the Maine Turnpike Authority, law enforcement agencies, insurance companies, private industries and concerned citizens.

This represents the first-ever multi-agency effort to gather transportation safety data, compile it into one reference book and identify the priority challenges Maine faces today. Data sources include the following:

- Federal Highway Administration
- Maine Department of Transportation
- Maine Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Highway Safety
- Maine Department of Human Services, Bureau of Health
 - Maine Injury Prevention Program
 - Office of Data, Research and Vital Statistics
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- Maine Health Data Organization
- Maine Health Information Center, Crash Outcome Data and Evaluation System (CODES)
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- Fatal Accident Reporting System
- National Center for Statistics and Analysis.

Data included in this publication is developed from reported crashes. The topics covered reflect many key safety issues in Maine. The participating agencies can also provide information on other important areas of transportation safety interest such as Moose/Large Animals, Work Zones and other specific subjects.

Summary



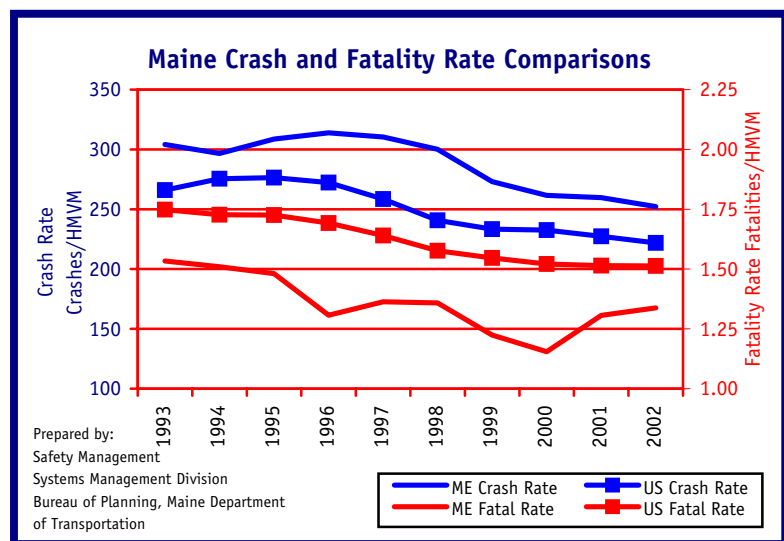
Maine is a rural state and our highways are the lifeblood of our economic and personal lives. The impact of road crashes in Maine is very significant. In 2002, there were about 37,000 crashes reported on Maine's public roads – that's 100 a day! Vehicle crashes on all Maine roads resulted in 216 fatalities and about 16,000 injuries and an estimated economic impact of \$1.2 billion. The crash numbers are substantial but the personal impact felt by the family and friends of those involved, injured or killed is immeasurable and long lasting.

Highway fatalities have increased both in the state and nationwide during recent years. Following steady reductions during much of the 1990's, Maine's fatality rate increased for the second straight year in 2002 to 1.32 Fatalities/Hundred Million Vehicle Miles (HMVM), making it the worst year on record since the early 1990's. The national rate for 2002 was 1.50.

The number of annual crashes in Maine increased from a low in 1991 of 34,064 crashes through 1997 when the number of crashes peaked at 42,581. Crash frequency has decreased since then to about 37,000 in 2002. Maine's crash rate of 252 crashes/HMVM is slightly higher than the national rate of 222.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury death in Maine and the 9th leading cause of all deaths. During a typical year, over 1,100 people are hospitalized as a result of a motor vehicle related injury and an estimated 12,300 are treated in emergency rooms.

The Data Committee of the Maine Transportation Safety Coalition has compiled this reference book to help define the traffic safety issues that confront our state. Our hope is that this book will serve as a comprehensive source for information on traffic safety. The top four priority crash topics identified are:



Seat Belts/Passenger Restraints
Lane Departure Crashes
Younger and Older Drivers
Aggressive Driving



Younger and Older Drivers

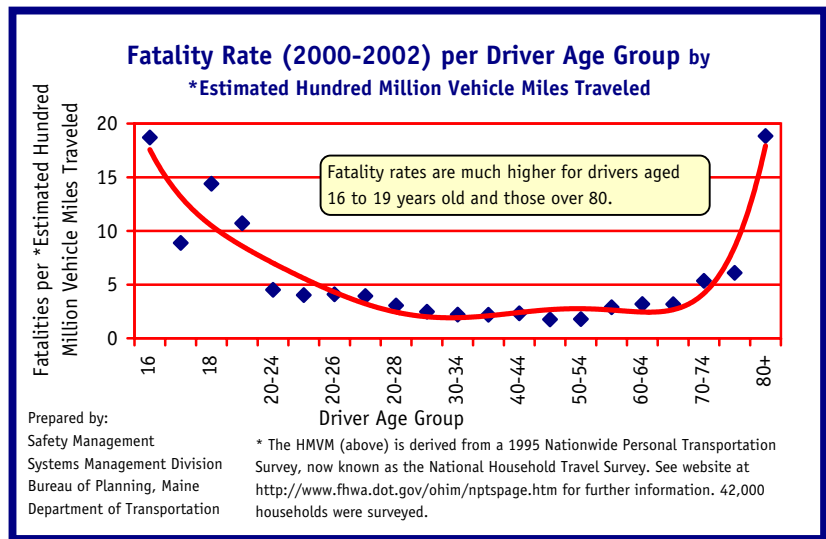
• Younger Drivers

Young drivers, ages 16 to 24, account for a disproportionate number of crashes, injuries and fatalities in Maine. While young drivers represent 13% of all Maine drivers, they represent nearly 30% of drivers involved in crashes. During an average year, one in every seven young drivers is involved in a motor vehicle crash. **For 16 and 17 year olds, one in four drivers will be involved in a crash each year. The injury rate for young drivers is 3 times higher than the injury rate for drivers over the age of 24.**

Leading contributing factors to teen fatal crashes are speed and driver inattention/ distraction. **Sixteen and seventeen year old drivers involved in crashes are 8 times more likely to be reported as driving at illegal or unsafe speed than drivers aged 25 to 98 (on a crashes-per-driver-population basis). Running off the road is the most prevalent crash type among teen drivers.** The total number of teens involved in fatal crashes over the last 5 years has not changed dramatically. The fatalities are linked to behaviors that can be positively impacted by education and enforcement. This points to the importance of developing good driving habits that can be carried throughout the years.

• Older Drivers

Maine has the third highest average resident age in the U.S. Over 100,000 licensed Maine drivers are 70 and older. The number of elderly drivers involved in crashes has risen over the past several years. As people age, they drive fewer miles but the risk of involvement in a motor vehicle crash increases dramatically. **The crash rate for a 78 year old is about twice that for a driver aged 65. Drivers in their early eighties have nearly triple the crash rate of drivers who are 65.** A variety of factors can affect older driver capabilities including vision, physical flexibility, reaction time, decision making, and medications. These factors can affect safe performance in key driving situations such as at intersections, turning, proper yielding, lane changing and actions that cause rear end crashes.





Older Drivers have a higher percentage of crashes than other drivers involving:

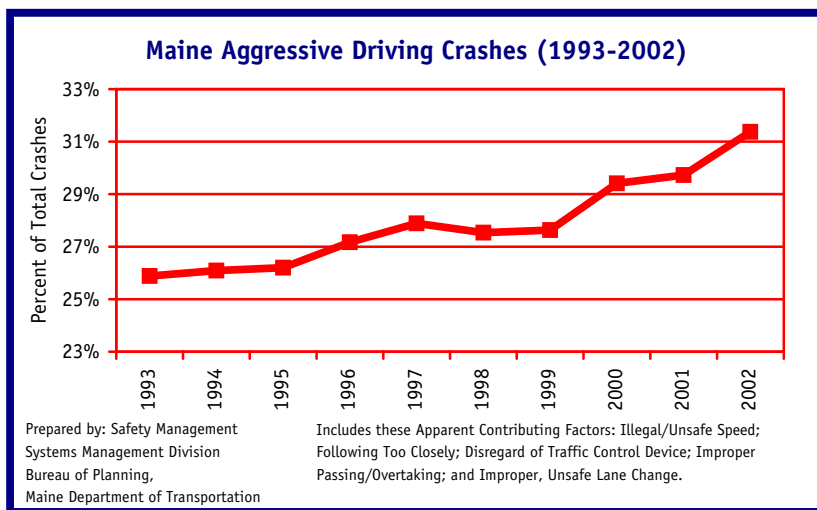
Contributing Factor/Pre-crash Action	Older Drivers (65 and Older)	Drivers Aged 25 through 64
A reported "Driver Contributing Factor" on a Police Crash Report	58%	47%
Intersection crashes	34%	23%
Not Paying Attention or Being Distracted	17%	14%
Failing to Yield the Right of Way	15%	6.5%
Disregard of Traffic Control Device	2.3%	1.1%
Making a Left Turn	14%	8%
Making a Right Turn	4%	2.9%
Backing	3.8%	2.8%
Changing Lanes	1.9%	1.2%

Aggressive Driving

Maine's overall crash trends are down, but those related to Aggressive Driving are steadily increasing. Better roads, improved comfort, handling and safety of newer vehicles, and other issues may be contributing to the growing phenomenon of unsafe speed and the resulting rise in injury and death. Aggressive driving occurs when a driver displays risky driving behavior, including:

- Illegal or Unsafe Speed
- Disregard of Traffic Control signs or signals
- Tailgating/Following Too Close
- Unsafe Passing
- Improper, Unsafe Lane Change.

In 2002, there were 11,589 crashes related to Aggressive Driving, resulting in 75 fatalities (about 40% of all Maine fatalities) and 6,100 injuries. This compares to 1993, when there were 9,490 crashes resulting in 64 fatalities (about 35% of the total fatalities) and 5,100 injuries.



The number of crashes involving aggressive driving has continuously increased over the past decade... and now accounts for nearly 1/3 of all Maine crashes and 40% of all fatalities.

Speed is the leading factor accounting for 55% of the aggressive driving crashes. Eighty-five percent of aggressive driving fatalities result from driving at excessive or unsafe speed.