



# The Status of Transportation Safety in Maine

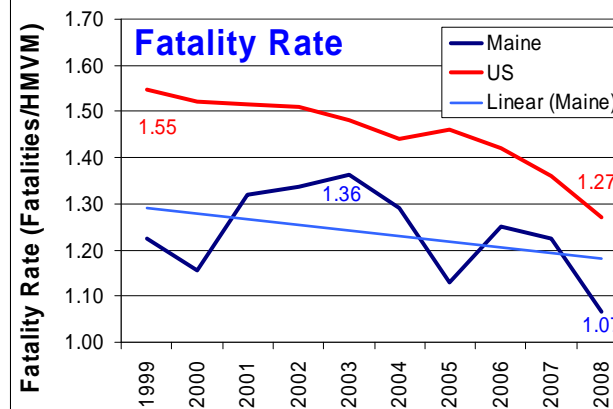
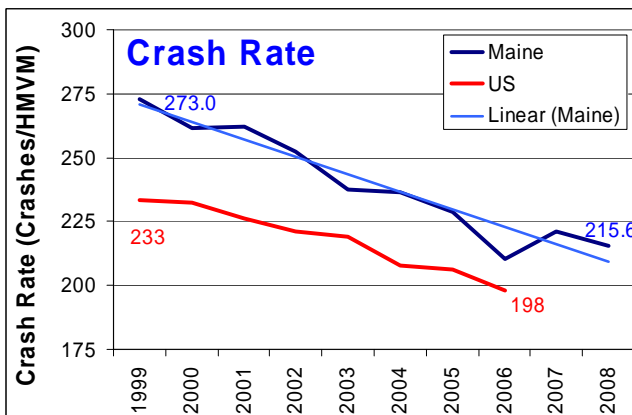
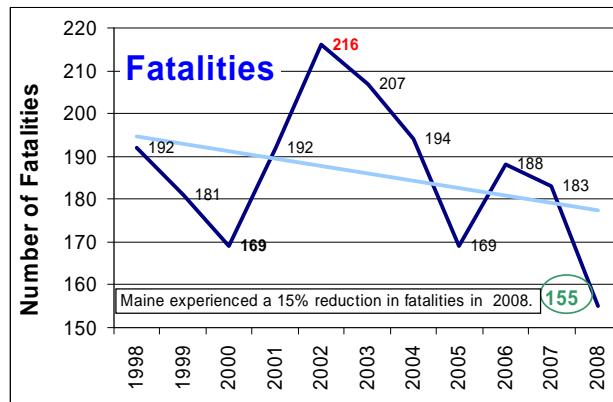
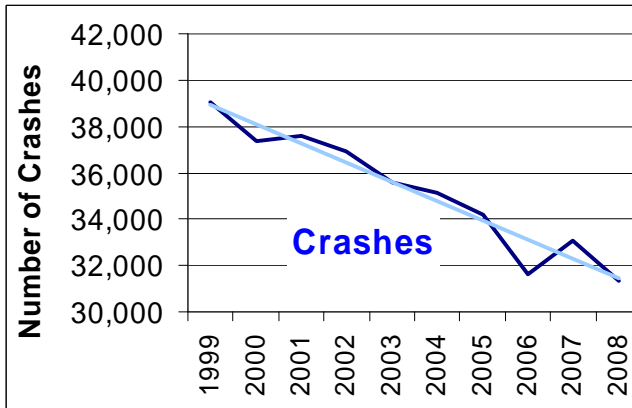
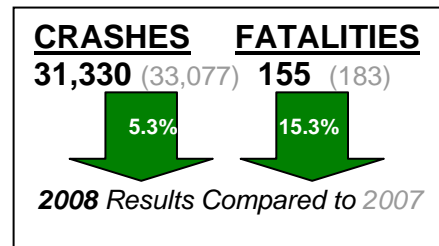
## 2008 Crash Results in Key Areas

The Maine Transportation Safety Coalition reports annually on the state's crash activity in four priority crash topics: **Seat Belts/ Passenger Restraints; Lane Departure Crashes; Younger and Older Drivers; and Illegal/Unsafe Speed** plus the other noteworthy crash areas of **Alcohol/Drugs, Motorcycles** and **Distracted Driving** (new for 2008). 2007 results are shown in gray. Ten-year charts in each section include a light blue estimated trend line.

### Overall 2008 Maine Crash Results

Maine experienced its lowest number of fatalities (155) in several decades. Despite reduced travel resulting from increased energy costs, this still translates to a rate based (fatalities/total miles driven) improvement as well. You have to go all the way back to 1959 to find a lower fatality count (136) - and in 1959, there were far fewer cars on the road and far fewer miles were traveled, and the population since then has increased by 70%. Crash and Fatality rate charts are shown below comparing Maine's experience with national rates.

- Crash Rate decreased in 2008, but is above the national average. Maine's crash rate is 215.6 Crashes/Hundred Million Vehicle Miles (HMVM). Latest national rate is 198 (2006)<sup>1</sup>.
- Maine's Fatality Rate of 1.07 Fatalities/HMVM is a decrease over 2007's rate of 1.22.
- Maine's Fatality Rate continues below the national rate of 1.27 (2008 FARS reported data).



<sup>1</sup> National crash and fatality rates are from USDOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics *Data Notes*.

1. Total **Fatality** counts are from Maine Fatal Accident Report System (FARS).

**Crash** data is from MaineDOT systems that track crashes on public roads.

2. Crashes can be caused by a combination of factors, so one crash may have relationships to several of the categories listed in this report.

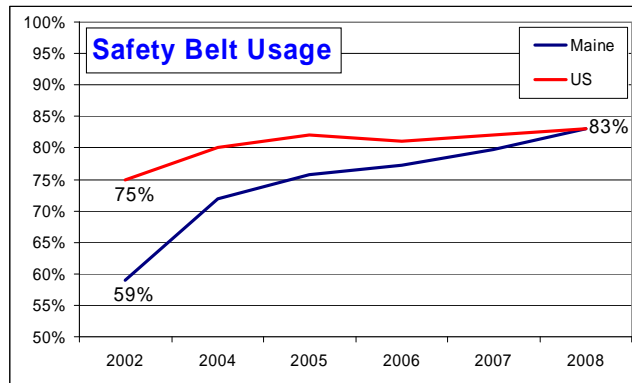
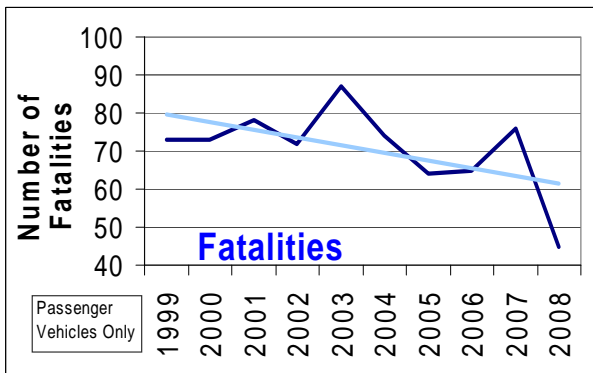
# Status of Transportation Safety in Maine – 2008

The following is a summary of some of Maine's common crash factors and types<sup>2</sup>. The top part of the list summarizes those topics covered in this report, and they are shown in the order of average annual number of resulting fatalities. The right-hand column provides an indication of how severe an average crash in that category is. The second part of the list shows 'Other Crash Trends' that have frequent interest.

Maine's Top Crash Types			
(Based on Annual Average of last 5 years experience)			
	Avg. Annual Fatalities	Improvement Trend (Red indicates increase)	Severity - Fatalities/1000 crashes
<b>All Crash Types</b>	<b>177.8</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>5.38</b>
Lane Departure	132.4	0.0%	11.08
Speed	75.4	5.7%	11.65
Unbelted	64.8	23.8%	
16-24 Year Old	59.4	22.5%	4.87
Alcohol	58.8	30.4%	33.8
Distracted/Inattentive	45	12.7%	3.66
65-98 Year Old	37.6	22.0%	8.05
Motorcycles	20.4	40.0%	35.03
<b>Other Crash Trends</b>			
Winter	31.6		2.7
Intersections	19.8		3.12
Rear End	15.6		0.66
Large Trucks	13.0		18.2
Pedestrians	11.6		44.8
Moose	2.8		3.81
Bicycles	2.4		11.8

## CRASH TRENDS

**SAFETY BELT** usage improves, but unbelted fatalities continue to be a concern.



**UNBELTED FATALITIES**

**45 (76)**

**40.8%**

**2008 Results**

*Compared to 2007*

There were 45 unbelted fatalities in passenger vehicles. This is 41% of the 108 passenger motor vehicle crash fatalities (does not include large trucks, pedestrians, bicycles, motorcycles, ATV's, etc.) Maine's seat belt usage rate in 2008 rose again to 83% -that is the same as the national average usage rate. Non-use of seat belts does impact the fatality results in some of the following sections. Maine did pass a primary seat belt law effective 4/1/2008.

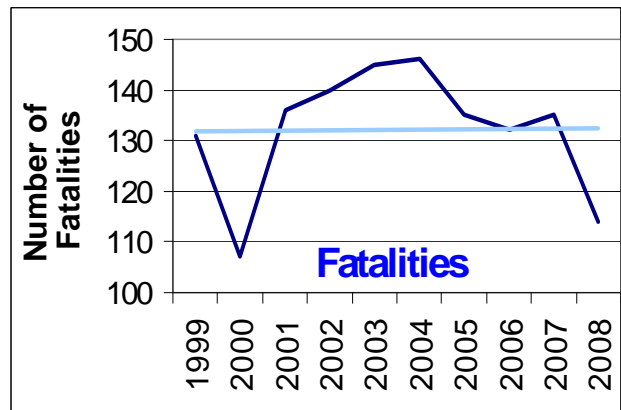
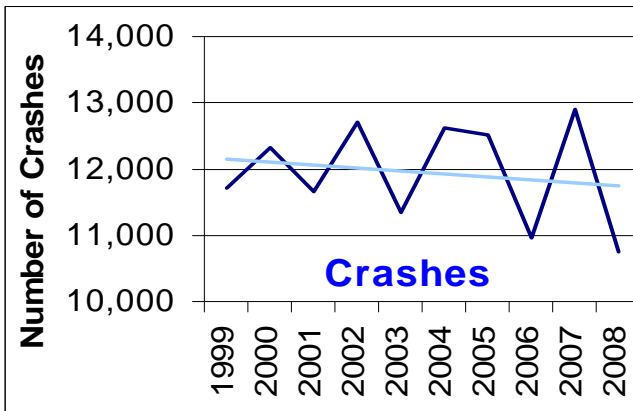
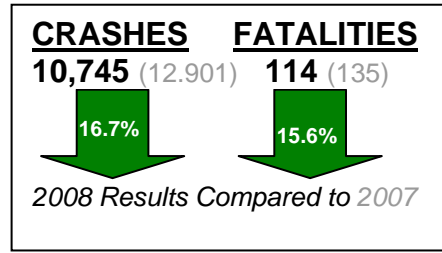
*Note<sup>2</sup>: See additional background on many of these topics in MTSC's The Status of Transportation Safety in Maine. Lane Departure is a crash where at least one vehicle leaves its proper lane of travel – resulting in Run Off Road or Head On crashes.*

# The Status of Transportation Safety in Maine - 2008

## LANE DEPARTURE

crashes continue as Maine's most frequent fatal crash type.

- Lane Departure (LD) crashes are **34%** of Maine's crash total.
- 114 fatalities resulted from Lane Departure crashes, and although a good reduction from 2007, this still represents **74%** of Maine's total **crash fatalities**. (about 33% of LD fatalities were Head On, 67% were Run Off Road).
- 49 (43%) of these fatalities were speed related.
- Weather plays a role in Maine's Lane Departure crashes – 5,100 crashes resulting in 8 fatalities occurred on wintry road surfaces; 1,300 crashes resulting in 25 fatalities on wet roads.
- Most fatalities did not occur on major or interstate highways. 53% of Lane Departure fatalities occurred on these secondary road classes: major collectors (27%), minor collectors (11%) and local roads (15%).

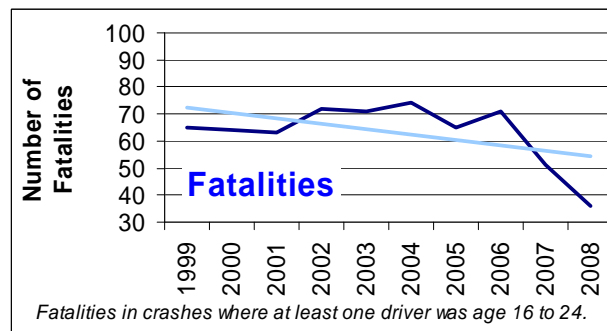
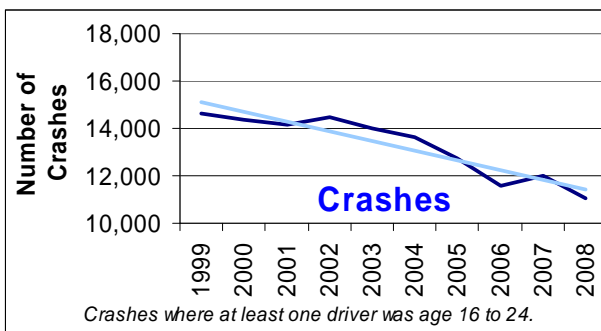
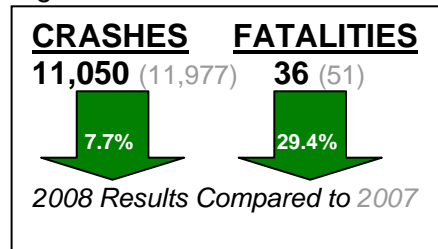


## YOUNGER DRIVERS.

(defined here as between the ages of 16 and 24) Thirty-six young drivers aged 16 to 24 were involved in fatal crashes that resulted in 33 fatalities (23% of total Maine traffic deaths). Twenty-seven young drivers and occupants died. Twenty-four of these fatal crashes were Lane Departure. Leading fatal crash factors were exceeding the posted speed limit (16); failure to keep in the proper lane (13); careless or inattentive driving (9) and operator inexperience (4).

Crash facts about Maine's youngest drivers – aged 16 through 19:

- 14 young drivers were involved in fatal crashes
- 13 fatal crashes resulted in a total of 13 deaths
- 130 alcohol or drug-related crashes (8% of all alcohol/drug related crashes).
- In fatal crashes, there were 3 teen drivers with positive BAC
- Of the 13 fatalities involved drivers, 7 wore seat belts.



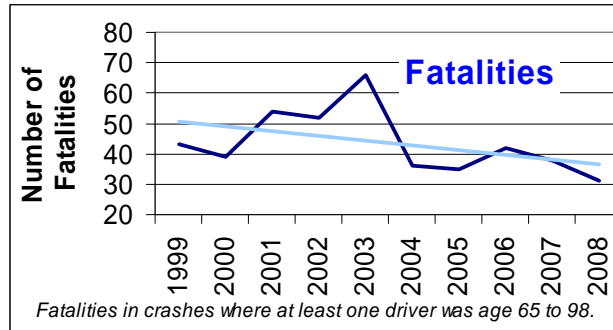
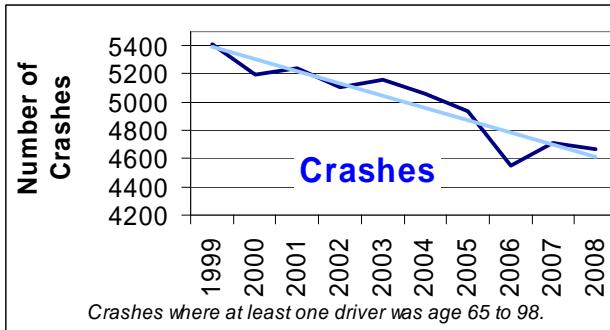
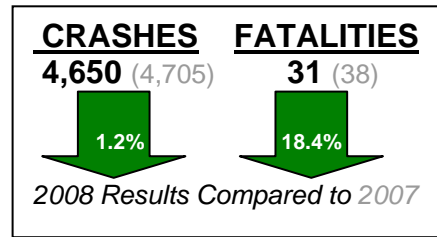
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**OLDER DRIVERS.** (defined as age 65 and older) Thirty drivers over 65 years of age and older were involved in fatal crashes that resulted in 31 deaths.

Thirty-three individuals in this age group died in crashes. Eighteen fatal crashes were Lane Departure. Leading crash characteristics are different than those for younger drivers.

They include:

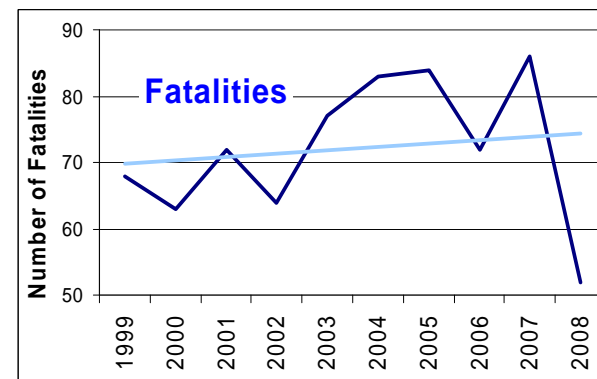
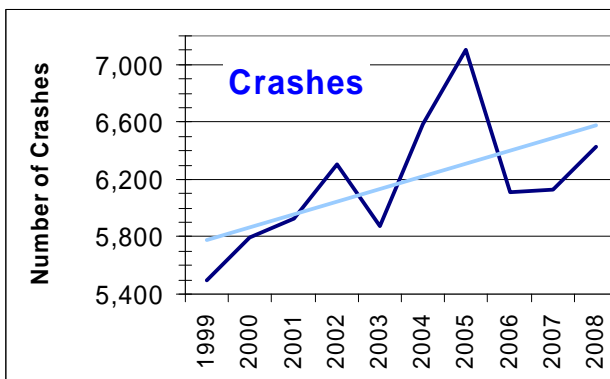
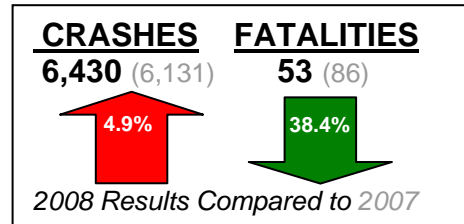
- Careless or Inattentive (11)
- Failure to Keep in Proper Lane (10)
- Failure to Yield the Right of Way (6)
- Failure to obey traffic signs, traffic control devices, or safety zone laws (4)
- Drowsy, sleepy, asleep or fatigued (3)



**ILLEGAL/UNSAFE SPEED,** a core element of Aggressive Driving showed a **increase in crashes but decrease in fatalities in 2008.**

Speed-related crashes account for 20.5% of the total crashes and 34% of total fatalities.

- The biggest concern is excessive speed can lead to other driver errors and serious injuries.
- Adjusting speed for weather-related road conditions is a problem. Unsafe speed was noted in 4,312 crashes on snowy, slushy or icy road surfaces, and another 668 occurred on wet road surfaces.



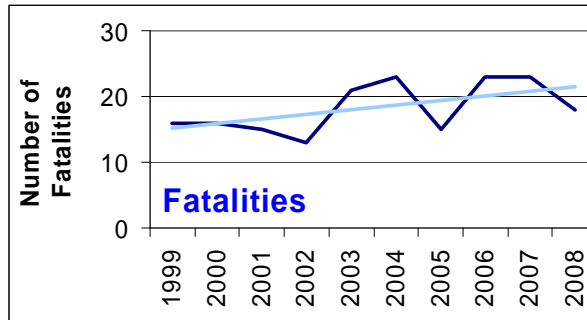
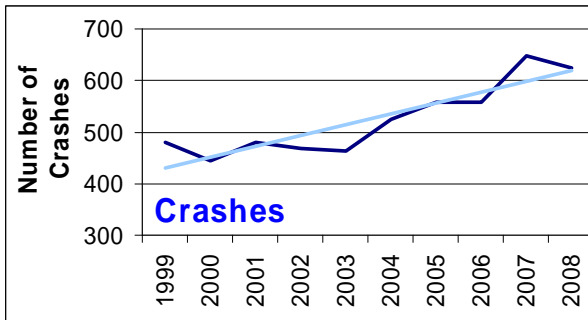
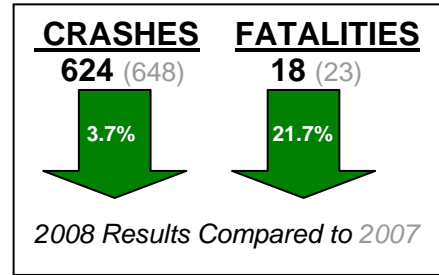
Note: See additional background on these topics in MTSC's **The Status of Transportation Safety in Maine.** **Aggressive Driving** is a crash where the driver displays a risky behavior – that can be reflected through various driver contributing factors listed on a Police Crash Report. This report will track one of those behaviors – *Illegal or Unsafe speed.*

## The Status of Transportation Safety in Maine - 2008

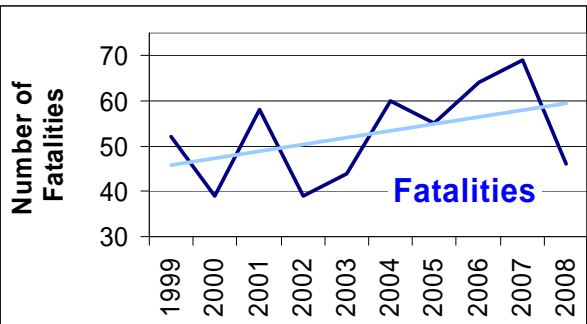
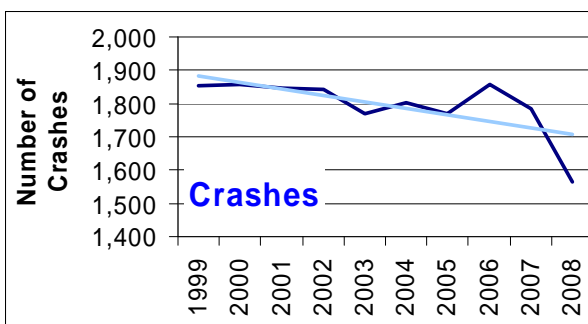
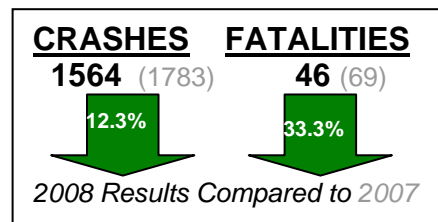
In addition to MTSC's four identified leading crash concern areas, the following three areas are reported on for 2008:

**MOTORCYCLE** crashes resulted in eighteen fatalities. Motorcycle/scooter crashes will be a trend to watch with fuel costs causing travelers to consider cheaper transportation modes. In 2008, fatalities and crashes both decreased, however, longer term general crash and fatality trends are increasing. Motorcycle crash aspects include:

- There was a positive BAC for the motorcycle operator in 3 of the fatal crashes
- Helmets were not worn by 78% of the riders killed.
- Leading age group of motorcycle operator fatalities is 26-54 (10 fatalities).
- Fifteen of the 18 fatal motorcycle crash fatalities were single vehicle occurrences.
- 14 of the fatalities were male, 4 were female.
- There is an increase in motorcycle ownership in the 40 and above age group and there is an increase in motorcycle rider fatalities in that age group during the last 10 years.



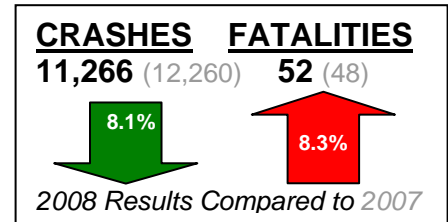
**ALCOHOL**-related crash fatalities decreased in 2008, as did the percentage of Maine's alcohol-related fatal crashes. However, the longer term fatality trend reflects an overall increase. Maine had 39 alcohol-related fatal crashes, and 35 of these fatal crashes had a BAC of .08 or higher (24% of all fatal crashes). This was below last years' fatality level (33% of total crashes) and below the FARS national rate of 32% (2008). In fatal crashes, 10 young drivers, age 16 to 24, had positive BAC levels, four 16-20 year olds had positive BAC results.



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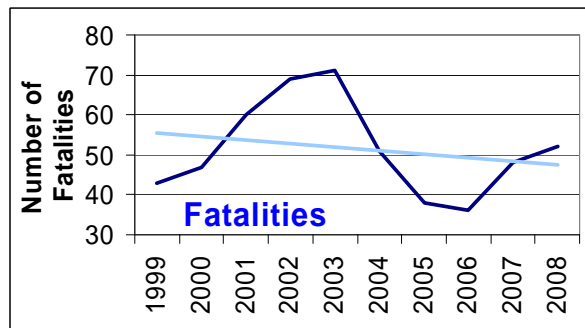
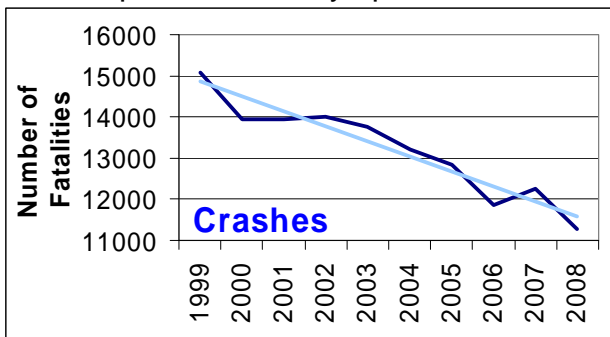
## DISTRACTIONS/INATTENTION

Some crashes result when the driver takes their eyes off the road or their mind away from the driving decision needs. Various circumstances lead to distractions including talking to someone in the car, trying to reach for something on the floor or in the backseat, cell phone use/texting, or trying to open a CD case. It is difficult to accurately collect this information at the crash scene since drivers won't always volunteer what lead to the crash.



Maine has enacted a Distracted Drivers law that became effective on September 12, 2009 that includes this definition: "Operation of a motor vehicle while distracted" means the operation of a motor vehicle by a person who, while operating the vehicle, is engaged in an activity:

- (1) That is not necessary to the operation of the vehicle; and
- (2) That actually impairs, or would reasonably be expected to impair, the ability of the person to safely operate the vehicle.



Contact Information: Maine Transportation Safety Coalition, P.O. Box 818, Augusta, ME 04333-0818 and on the web at <http://themtsc.org>