



SPOKANE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - News Release -

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2009 Crash Stats

Even though traffic deaths in Washington State reached a 50-year low in 2009 (see link <http://www.wtsc.wa.gov/pie/releases/2009Fatalis.php>), last year was a deadly and busy year for fatality and serious injury collisions in Spokane County. The Spokane County Sheriff's Office investigated a total of 17 fatal and 15 serious injury crashes in 2009. These numbers do not reflect what the Spokane Police Department or the Washington State Patrol investigated within their respective jurisdictions. The sheriff's office investigated only 13 fatality crashes in 2008.

The 32 total crashes represent those collisions that occurred on county roadways or within the city limits of Spokane Valley. There were two fatals and two serious injury collisions that occurred in the City of Spokane Valley. One of the fatalities did occur within the city of Spokane, but was investigated by the sheriff's office due to the fatal incident protocol being invoked (June 19, 2009 crash at 200 E Indiana Ave near Planned Parenthood – carjacking suspect involved in high speed pursuit). The rest of the collisions happened in the county.

The uses of drugs and/or alcohol, along with speeding, were the top two contributing factors in these collisions (18 out of the 32 or ~56% for *both* factors). The non-use of seatbelts also contributed in 8 out of 32 crashes or approximately 25%.

In addition, the past year really affected teen drivers. Nine out of the 32 or ~28% of the crashes involved drivers age 16-19. One of the fatal collisions involved a 16-year-old female who was talking on a cell phone at the time of the crash. Overall, the age range of the drivers and/or victims involved in these collisions was 4-68 years old. Besides just the 32 involved drivers, an additional 9 occupants were seriously injured in these crashes.

The primary reason for emphasis patrols, like Driver Hammered Get Nailed and Click It or Ticket, is to reduce the amount of traffic deaths and injuries on our roadways. The Spokane County Sheriff's Office has in the past and will continue

into the future to participate in these emphasis patrols to make Spokane County roadways safer.

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one safety problem in American transportation. They account for 94 percent of transportation death and 99 percent of transportation injury. In 1996, 41,907 people were killed and 3,511,000 people were injured in police reported crashes. The lifetime economic cost of these crashes is over \$150 billion annually. The share borne by taxpayers is staggering: the public pays 13 percent of the cost of injuries treated in an emergency department; 26 percent of the cost of injuries requiring hospitalization; and 48 percent of the cost of injuries treated in a rehabilitation hospital [NHTSA 2020 Report].

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