

# 2014 Delaware Traffic Fatality End of Year Wrap Up

**Dover** – As we welcome a new year and hopefully a safer year, Delaware Highway Safety officials are reporting preliminary end of year total traffic fatalities. In 2014, Delaware saw a twenty percent (20%) increase in traffic fatalities compared to 2013. Delaware experienced 101 fatalities in 2013 compared to 125 in 2014. Within the past twelve years, the highest number of traffic fatalities that occurred in a single year in Delaware was in 2003 with 148 total traffic fatalities followed by 2006 with 147. The lowest year was 2013 with 101 traffic fatalities.

“With nearly half (46%) of our highway fatalities resulting from impaired driving and another 43% of those fatalities stemming from a failure to wear a seatbelt, the tragedy is that these deaths were preventable. The increase in highway fatalities over the past year is quite concerning as our motorists need to understand the consequences of their action,” said Lewis D. Schiliro, Secretary of Safety and Homeland Security.

Impairment by alcohol and other drugs continues to be a major factor in overall traffic crashes and fatalities. Alcohol and drug related fatalities made up forty-seven percent (47%) of the total motor vehicle crash fatalities, This is a slight increase from 2013. The major increases in fatalities involved motor vehicle occupants involved in traffic crashes as compared to other highway users, including pedestrians and motorcyclists. In addition, tragically there were twelve crashes in which more than one person was killed. Contributing factors to the multiple fatality crashes included speed and/or impaired driving.

New Year’s Eve signaled the end of the 2014 *Checkpoint*

*Strikeforce* and *Safe Family Holiday* campaigns. With the 12 DUI arrests from New Year's Eve, that brings the total number of people arrested for DUI in Delaware to 4,086 in 2014, down from 2013 in which 4,249 persons were arrests for DUI statewide.

"The Office of Highway Safety remains committed to implementing sound initiatives designed to encourage safer driving on Delaware roads," said Jana Simpler, director of the Office of Highway Safety. "We will continue to work with our safety partners to develop campaigns to protect all motorists on our roads."

Seat belt use has increased slightly across Delaware last year. Delaware's seat belt use rate is currently ninety-two percent (92%) compared to the national seat belt use rate of eighty-seven percent (87%). Motorcycle fatalities decreased twenty-five percent (25%) from 2013 to 2014. In 2013, twenty motorcyclists lost their lives on Delaware roads and in 2014, that number was fifteen. Pedestrian and bicycle fatalities both saw a slight increase from 2013. There were three bicycle fatalities in 2014 compared to two in 2013. Pedestrian fatalities continue to be a traffic issue with seven occurring in December 2014 alone. There were twenty-seven pedestrian fatalities last year compared to twenty-six the year before. Delaware has previously focused on aggressive driving crashes as a whole but has now turned the focus to speed, the predominate aggressive driving crash factor. Speed has contributed to 44 of the 112 fatal crashes in 2014.

"We will continue our statewide education and outreach efforts in 2015 to make pedestrians aware of safe walking and crossing practices to try and curb the pedestrian safety issues at hand in Delaware," said Alison Kirk, community relations officer for the Delaware Office of Highway Safety.

As 2015 begins, OHS will conduct its first traffic safety mobilization of the new year focusing on unrestrained and

improperly restrained occupants in vehicles, as well as speeding drivers. Beginning January 16, state and local law enforcement agencies across the state will be conducting overtime saturation patrols after 2:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday when this crash problem is at its highest. Examples of improperly worn seat belts are those that are put behind the back or under the arm. For a seat belt to be effective and save a life, it must be worn properly with the lap belt low and snug across the hips and the shoulder harness worn across the shoulder and chest with minimal slack.

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