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North Dakota sees decrease in motor vehicle fatalities in 2016

Lack of seat belt use significant cause in most deaths

There were 114 people who lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes in North Dakota in 2016, a decrease of 13 percent (17 fatalities) from 2015, according to preliminary crash data released by the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) and the North Dakota Highway Patrol (NDHP). This is the lowest number of motor vehicle fatalities in North Dakota since 2010 when there were 105.

"It is encouraging to see the decrease in motor vehicle fatalities," says Grant Levi, NDDOT Director. "While progress is being made through roadway improvements, traffic safety education and enforcement programs, we still have much work to do because the loss of one life is one too many. To continue to improve, we must all practice safe driving habits because we all have the same goal to safely arrive at our destination every day."

Preventable behavior-related factors such as not wearing a seat belt, alcohol, and speed contribute significantly to motor vehicle fatalities in North Dakota. Of the 114 fatalities in 2016, approximately 59 percent were not wearing their seat belt, 39 percent were alcohol-related (this percent may increase pending final toxicology results), and 21 percent were speed-related. Victims ranged in age from 2 years old to 95 years old and 84 percent were North Dakota residents.

Colonel Michael Gerhart, NDHP superintendent, adds, "Law enforcement's greatest partnership is with the public. When motorists buckle up, drive sober, and obey posted speed limits, lives are saved."

Of the motor vehicle fatalities, 87 (76.3%) were in a passenger vehicle, 12 (10.5%) were motorcyclists, 7 (6.1%) pedestrians, 5 (4.4%) individuals on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and 3 (2.6%) bicyclists.

Preliminary crash data from 2016 also shows that 40 percent of motor vehicle fatalities were the result of single vehicle rollovers (this excludes motorcycles, snowmobiles and ATVs) with 74 percent unbelted and 85 percent of the unbelted totally or partially ejected from the vehicle. Nearly 62 percent of single-vehicle rollover fatalities were alcohol-related.

Families are invited to create memorials for those who have died in crashes in North Dakota at ndcodefortheroad.org/memorial.

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