



MaineDOT Flash Facts

## Topic: Crashes are not Accidents

### General Themes:

- Final crash figures are not in yet for 2005, but every year there are about 35,000 reported crashes that result in about two hundred fatalities on Maine roads.
- Almost all of Maine's crashes result from unsafe driver actions – the bottom line from this fact is that crashes are almost always PREVENTABLE. The most frequent driver errors that lead to crashes include: traveling at unsafe speeds; not paying attention to driving; failing to yield the right of way; disregard of traffic control devices; and following too close.
- Each fatality and each injury has its own emotional story line...The hurt affects each victim's family member, friend, co-worker and/or fellow student.
- A driving error can be the most costly and life changing mistake you ever make...physically, financially and emotionally.

Many people resolve to make the New Year a healthy one. A major health concern in Maine is the impact of vehicle crashes – about 35,000 crashes occur in Maine each year, with 200 people killed and another 15,000 are injured.

Most crashes are the result of unsafe actions of at least one of the involved drivers. Make a resolution that you'll avoid driving errors and do your part to keep Maine roads safe.

In addition to building and maintaining a quality transportation system, MaineDOT wants to remind every driver that YOU play an important role in crash prevention.

During the rest of this New Year's week, we will look at crash prevention behaviors that you should consistently be using.

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Driving behavior affects your susceptibility to crashes. A key ingredient to crash-free driving is paying constant attention to the driving task. When you are behind the wheel, take a quick inventory:

- What are you thinking about?
- Where are your eyes focused?
- How many other things are you doing or thinking about while you drive?

Avoid distractions and focus on your driving – so much can change on the road and happen very quickly.

Realize that you might miss a serious situation when you're not paying attention, such as:

- someone pulling out from a side road or driveway
  - an animal crossing the road
  - a child crossing the street
  - traffic ahead stopping suddenly
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You can make a difference in the tragic toll on our highways.

Approach driving with the attitude..."My driving style can prevent a crash" and consistently drive with that awareness.

Things you can do to reduce your chances of becoming a crash victim are:

- Hold off on that cell phone call.
- Change the CD or tune the radio only when your vehicle is stopped.
- Put the seat belt on before the car starts moving.
- Take 15 minutes and eat that burger or drink your coffee in the restaurant.
- Concentrate on the driving experience. (You know how after some trips you can't remember traveling down a stretch of road. Imagine if a problem on the road occurred on that same stretch - you would be reacting more slowly and your delayed reaction might come too late to avoid the crash.)
- Give the other person a break.

**Keep cool when:** the person ahead is not going as fast as you would like, or the person pulls out just ahead of you; or you catch up to the snow plow.

- The inconvenience may not be fun, but don't you make an unsafe move that compromises everyone's safety.



- Realize what little you gain when you take a chance on the road and how much is at risk.
- Drive at a speed that is Safe and Legal.
- Make safe driving adjustments (spelled “SLOW DOWN”) when road or weather conditions are less than optimal.

Road situations can change in a split second, so scope out the road and roadside ahead to identify potential upcoming changes you may need to react to. (You can prevent crashes even when someone else makes an error.)

Think about how little time you save by going faster, and what the safety consequences might be. No one’s life should be jeopardized just to save a few minutes.

***Be a Road Model...*** Crashes are preventable, so do your part when driving to keep Maine healthy and always wear your seat belt.