

MOTOR VEHICLE-DEER CRASHES IN 2005



Motor vehicle-deer crashes continue to be cause for concern in highway safety. Deer are the third most commonly struck object in Wisconsin (behind striking another vehicle and striking a fixed object). In 2005, 12 people died in 12 fatal, motor vehicle-deer crashes. In 507 injury crashes in which a total of 664 people were hurt: 93 people suffered incapacitating injuries; less serious injuries totaled 271, and 300 people were possibly injured.¹ A recent study by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation made the following discoveries:

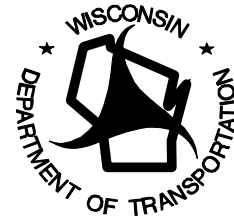
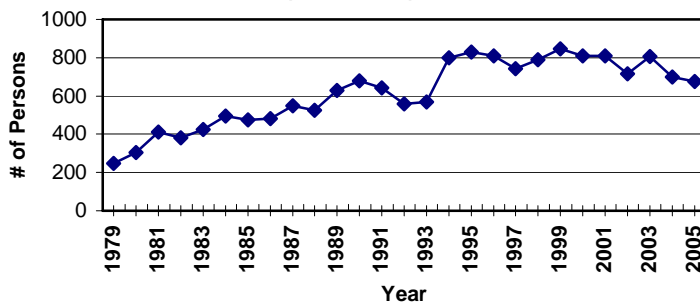


Figure 1:
Motor Vehicle-Deer Crashes:
Persons Injured or Killed
(1979-2005)

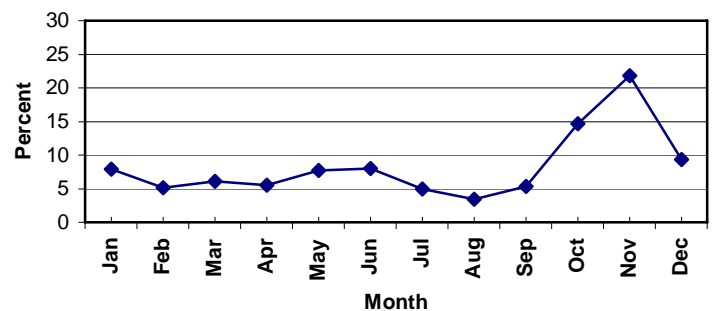


- **While October and November are the peak months, June often accounts for a surprising number of injuries.** In 4 of the last 10 years, June ranked as the worst or second worst month for injuries. In 2005, injuries were the worst in November, with 113 injuries compared to 100 in October and 93 in June.
- **Deer crashes follow time of day patterns based on the season.** In 2005, deer crashes from April to August were most likely to occur between 8 p.m. and Midnight and from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.; in November to January, they were most common between 5 p.m. and Midnight and from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.

- **The number of persons injured or killed in deer crashes has increased over the past 25 years.** Since 1979, there has been a general increase in the number of persons injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes with deer. The 676 people injured or killed in 2005 was 106 more than in 1993 and the thirteenth highest in 26 years of tracking. 1999 was the highest with 847 (Figure 1).

- **Deer crashes peak in October-November with a secondary peak in May-June.** In 2005, investigating officers reported 17,555 motor vehicle-deer crashes.² Of those, 6,405 (36.5%) occurred in October or November. The secondary peak time of May-June included 2,766 crashes (15.8%) (Figure 2).

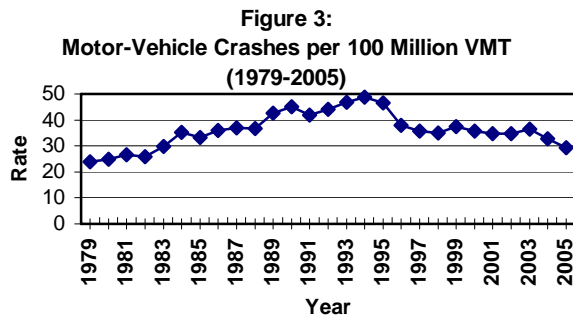
Figure 2:
Motor Vehicle Crashes by Month (2005)



¹ "Possible injury" is defined as any injury that is not evident at the scene but that is claimed by the individual or suspected by the law enforcement officer.

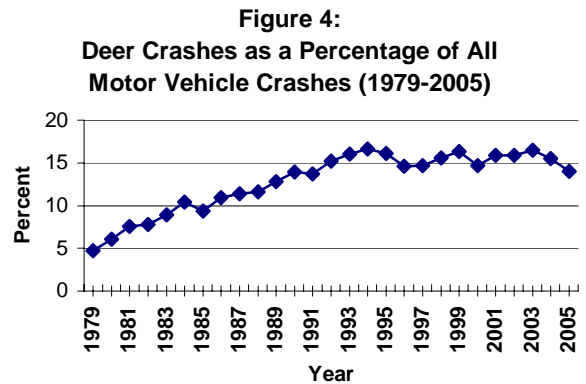
² Effective January 1, 1996, "property damage only" crashes with less than \$1,000 damage need not be reported. Previously, the threshold was \$500. Hence, reported property damage only crashes sustained a substantial drop overall during the past five years.

- **In one Wisconsin county, motor vehicle-deer crashes outnumbered non-deer crashes.** In Shawano County more than half of all police-reported crashes involved deer in 2005.
- **Dane, Waupaca, and Shawano counties had the highest number of reported deer crashes.** Dane County had the most motor vehicle-deer crashes reported in 2005 with 838. Waupaca followed with 726 and Shawano with 707.



- The number of reported deer crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled took an upward trend from the late 1970s up until 1994. During the period 1994-1995, the rate declined sharply, tapering off to an average of 36 crashes from 1996 through 2003, with a further decline to an average of 31 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled occurring for the years 2004 and 2005 combined (Figure 3).

- **Deer crashes account for a growing percentage of all reported crashes.** In 1978 and 1979, deer crashes accounted for only 5.1% and 4.7% of all crashes, respectively. From 1996 to 2005, the number of deer crashes as a percentage of all yearly crashes have averaged 15.4% (Figure 4).



- **Deer crashes typically occur in rural settings.** In 2005, 16,169 of the 17,555 (92.1%) deer crashes occurred on rural roads.

- **Motorcyclists need to be particularly alert to deer.** In utility trucks involved in deer crashes resulted in a fatality or injury to an occupant, 81.1% of motorcycle-deer crashes resulted in a fatality or injury to a motorcyclist. All of the 12 motor vehicle/deer crash fatalities in 2005 were motorcyclists.
- **Another indicator of motor vehicle/deer crashes is the number of deer carcasses removed from Wisconsin's roadway system.** These figures are compiled each fiscal year (July through June) by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. For Fiscal Year 2005, a total of 41,687 carcasses removed. Note that the DNR figure is much higher than the WisDOT figure. This is because the WisDOT figure only includes crashes that were reported by law enforcement officers. For more information on deer carcass figures, please call Brad Koele, WDNR at (608) 261-7589 or by email at bradley.koele@dnr.state.wi.us

These statistics are based only on crashes reported to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation by law enforcement officers. Deer crashes self-reported by drivers are *not* included. Also, crashes caused by drivers avoiding deer are *not* included. The information used in this monograph was taken from *The Wisconsin Crash Facts Book* and the Division of Motor Vehicles Accident Database. Questions or comments may be directed to: Wisconsin State Patrol/Bureau of Transportation Safety at (608) 267-2470.