

Safety on Rural Roads — and for Our Kids

A visit to Minnesota's annual Farmfest, a gathering of the state's agriculture community, proved thought-provoking for Minnesota NETS Coordinator Lisa Kons. While there to serve as an education resource for attendees, she heard and witnessed resistance to wearing seatbelts. She shares her thoughts in this month's [blog](#).

This issue focuses on the risks and challenges present on Minnesota's rural roadways including the seasonal risks of vehicle-deer collisions and traffic safety during the busy harvest season. While the uninformed may think driving is more dangerous on metro roadways with more vehicles and traffic, the opposite is actually the case. Although the 80 counties of greater Minnesota combined represent just half of our population, 56% of the state's fatal crashes happen on rural roads.

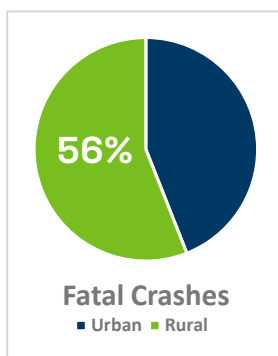
September also means special attention to the safety of the youngest vehicle occupants. Child Passenger Safety Week is Sept. 15–21. Read more in this issue and see our [Checklist for Child Passenger Safety](#).

Great Scenery, Greater Risk

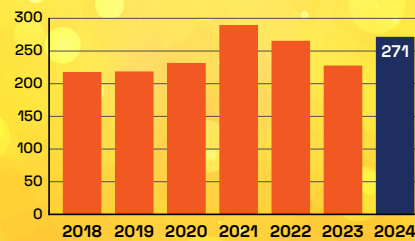
Whether you live there or are passing through, Minnesota's rural roadways offer scenic views and opportunities to experience small town life. But driving in these Minnesota areas can pose a higher risk of being in a crash with fatalities or serious injuries. According to the Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), 56% of fatal crashes in 2022 occurred in rural areas.

While OTS says the prevalence of two-lane roads is a leading factor, there are numerous reasons why crashes are more prevalent in Greater Minnesota. They include:

- Two-way, two-lane roads: greater risk of head-on collision, unsafe and illegal passing.
- Shoulder widths are typically narrower.
- Light is poorer at night.
- Lower seatbelt use.
- Greater risk of crash with wildlife.
- Greater driving distances and longer behind-the-wheel time contributes to drowsy driving.
- Rural drivers often believe they have a margin of error as large as the fields around them.



MINNESOTA TRAFFIC FATALITIES January 1 – August 18



Source: Minnesota Department of Public Safety

Traffic Fatalities Continue to Rise

- In 2024 through August 18, there were **271** traffic-related deaths on Minnesota roadways. This is 19 percent more than at this time last year (227), 2 percent more than in 2022 (265) and 6 percent less than in 2021 (289).
- Unbelted fatalities (**61**) are 33 percent more than this time last year (46), 15 percent higher than in 2022 (53), three less than in 2021 (64) and 53 percent higher than in 2019 (40).

RURAL ROAD SAFETY SQUAD

30 people die EACH DAY from rural roadway departure crashes.

[The Rural Road Safety Squad](#) has safety solutions to address rural road departure problems, decrease speed and increase seatbelt use.

Download these great resources to engage your employees.





Make a Difference: Child Passenger Safety Week is September 15 – 21

Traffic crashes remain a leading cause of death for those ages 14 and under. In 2022, the last year for which National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) final data is available, each day an average of three children were killed and 429 others injured in traffic crashes. In all, 1,129 child died as a result of crashes in 2022.

During the nationwide annual [Child Passenger Safety Week](#), safety professionals have numerous opportunities and tools available to get the word out on keeping kids safe when they ride. Watch your email for more ideas during the week-long event which culminates on Saturday, September 21 with Seat Check Saturday across Minnesota.

RESOURCES

- Reference the new [Minnesota Child Passenger Safety Law](#).
- The National Safety Council's [Child Passenger Safety Board](#) is a central repository for links to a broad range of resources from several organizations.
- [Safe Kids Worldwide](#) has tips for parents and caregivers on selecting the right car seat based on size and age.
- [NHTSA](#) has a robust selection of tools including fact sheets, social media posts, customizable news releases, graphics and banners. Many are available in both English and Spanish.

DID YOU KNOW...

- In passenger cars, car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by **71%** for infants and by **54%** for toddlers 1 to 4 years old. For light trucks, the corresponding reductions are **58%** and **59%**, respectively.
- NHTSA estimates that since 1975, child restraints have saved the lives of **11,606** children under the age of 5.
- A NHTSA study found that while most parents and caregivers believe they know how to properly install their car seats, **48%** have installed their child's car seat incorrectly.

Harvest Time Road Safety

As farmers and other agriculture employees work long days to bring the crop in, drivers can help by remaining patient and following these Farm Bureau tips:

- The slow-moving-vehicle emblem (orange triangle sign) indicates that a vehicle is traveling less than 25 mph. By law, farm equipment must have this reflector to warn oncoming drivers they are on the road.
- Farmers understand that their equipment may be slowing your trip. They will pull over to let you pass at the first, safe opportunity.
- Don't assume that a farm vehicle that pulls to the right side of the road is letting you pass. They may be turning left.
- If an oncoming farm vehicle approaches on a rural road and there's no passing room, bring your vehicle to a stop and pull over to let the farm vehicle pass.



Autumn Driving

As the days grow shorter and darker, check out these driving tips from [DriveSafeMN](#) and [AAA](#).

BE ON ALERT FOR:

- Sun Glare
- Changing Light
- Drowsiness
- Wildlife and [Deer](#)



**NETWORK OF
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MINNESOTA

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