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Speeding puts lives in danger, is a safety focus for Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day

Speeding plays a factor in traffic deaths and injuries every year across Kansas. Data shows it. Tragedies illustrate it.

It's also one of the many safety components of the national safety campaign Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day (Pbfd). The Kansas Department of Transportation urges everyone, whether in a vehicle, on a motorcycle/bicycle or even walking, to use caution and make safety a priority every day, but especially on Oct. 10 (the day set aside for Pbfd).

Across Kansas in 2023, 80 people died and 2,104 others suffered injuries in speed-related crashes, according to current KDOT data.

Craig Presley has seen the catastrophic aftermath of speeding. Presley is a Technical Trooper with the Kansas Highway Patrol and a crash investigator for 20 years. Two crashes he investigated immediately come to his mind.

A young woman exited a highway ramp going 105 mph, according to the KHP investigation. Her vehicle smashed into and under a parked semi, and, of course, she didn't survive. "She probably didn't even know what she hit, it happened so fast," Presley said.

In another fatal crash, a young man traveling about 100 mph overcorrected as he lost control on a slight curve. He slid into the oncoming lane and collided with an oncoming commercial vehicle.

With excessive speeding, Presley said, all it takes is "that one terrible mistake and the wrong location, wrong time. It just takes that one time."

"The laws of physics take over, and the human body just can't withstand some of these catastrophic collisions," he said.

Presley cites this math: If you drive 100 mph, you travel 146 feet per second. That's half a football field in the blink of an eye.

According to the KHP, “Drivers who exceed the maximum posted speed limit endanger their lives and the lives of all other motorists. Speeding also puts the lives of our law enforcement personnel in peril.”

One of the KDOT speeding statistics that stands out year after year: Younger drivers – particularly those ages 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 – make up by far the biggest share of drivers involved in speed-related crashes.

In 2023, for example, the largest share of those crashes – 916 – occurred among drivers ages 15 to 19. The next biggest share – 785 – was drivers ages 20 to 24. The numbers markedly and steadily declined with each successive older age group. And that trend also repeated itself from 2019 to 2022: younger drivers dominating speed-related crashes.

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