

WSDOT: 2011 Sees Fewest Collisions in a Decade

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - If you drive a vehicle in Washington, pat yourself on the back. Washington drivers are crashing their vehicles in lower numbers than at any time in the past decade. Fewer than 99,000 collisions occurred in 2011, down from 2001 and down significantly from the most recent peak in 2005. In 2005 more than 123,000 collisions killed and injured thousands, and snarled traffic for everyone. The turnaround is good news for drivers, and applauded by state highway safety officials. "Drivers get the lion's share of credit for this improvement," said Darrin Grondel, Director of the Washington Traffic Safety Commission. "Seat belts and air bags can reduce fatalities, but a reduction in collisions means there has been a marked improvement in driver behavior." "Our state continues to be a leader in traffic safety because so many Washingtonians have joined the Target Zero Team with a goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries," Grondel said.

Along with drivers, officials credit the coordinated efforts of state and local agencies brought together through our state's Target Zero program, a collective effort of traffic safety experts focused on finding out what causes collisions and how to prevent them. "Highway safety continues to be at the core of our efforts," said Washington Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond, noting how highway safety features such as rumble strips and cable guardrail continue to prevent collisions, reduce injuries, and save lives. "We are encouraged by the numbers but believe we can do even better. It's going to take a continued commitment from all us — highway planners, drivers, plus our partners in law enforcement and driver education," she said. The 2011 numbers are considered preliminary until Dec. 31, but officials don't expect them to change significantly. All categories of collisions are down, across the board. Injury collisions were down by about 20 percent, from the peak year of 2005. DUI-related collisions are down about 21 percent. Fatal collisions are down by about 30 percent from the peak year of 2005. "This supports what we've long believed," said State Patrol Chief John R. Batiste. "There are no accidents in traffic. Each of us has the power to reduce collisions simply by making better choices." Batiste believes the three most important choices are slowing down, paying attention to the road and driving sober. "We don't have to accept collisions as an inevitable fact of life," Batiste said. So go ahead, drivers- pat yourselves on the back. Just don't do it while you're driving.