

# MT Traffic Safety Problem Identification Overview

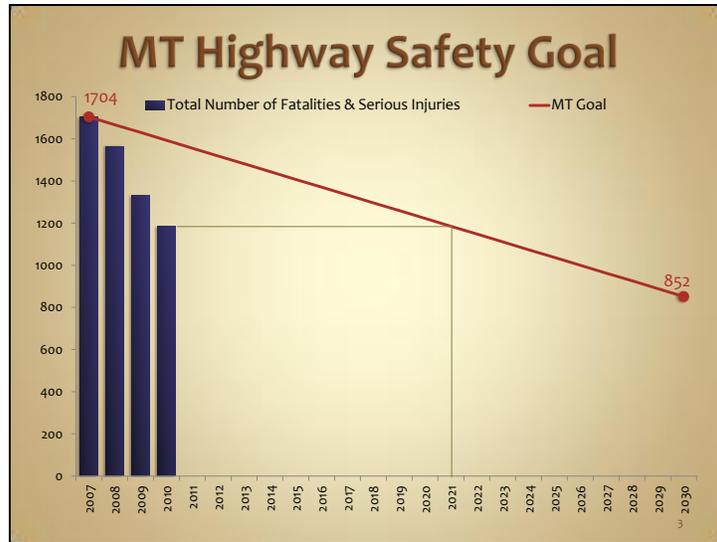
2010 Data



## **Statewide Summary**

### **CHSP VISION:**

All highway users in Montana arrive  
safely at their destinations.



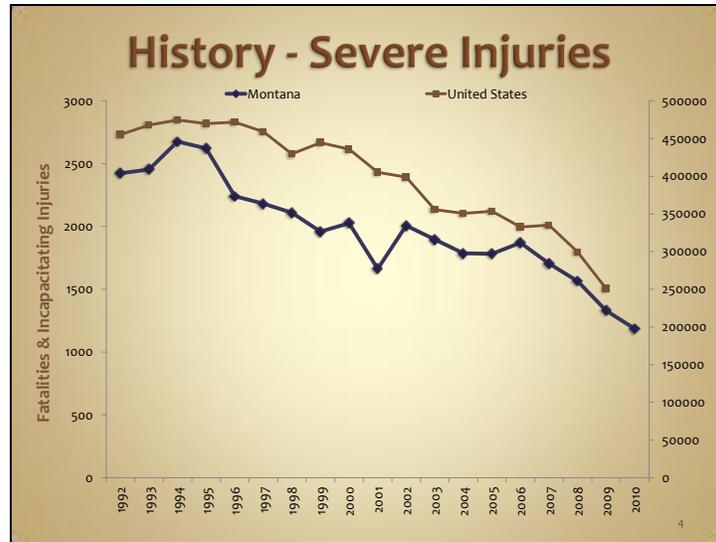
### WHY IS EVERYONE HERE TODAY? WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

At the CHSP Annual Meeting in 2009, all the traffic safety stakeholders present agreed that the long-range highway safety goal for MT would be to cut the number of fatalities and serious/incapacitating injuries in half, with a baseline of 1,704 (2007 data).

The red line is a linear depiction of how the total number of fatalities and serious injuries would need to decrease between 2007 and 2030 in order to meet our goal.

The blue bars are the actual number of fatalities and serious injuries that occurred on MT highways in the last four years. These numbers are dramatically lower than our goal trend line. If we continue the current ten-year trend we should meet this goal well before 2030. According to the 2010 data, we are already at the number we would hope to see in 2021!

Slide 4



**WE KNOW WHERE WE WANT TO GO - WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?**

This shows the history of severe injuries (fatalities & incapacitating/serious injuries) for both Montana and the US. The trend in both lines is downward. Both Montana and the nation have seen a steeper decrease in the most recent years.

### 2010 Highlights

	2009	2010	% Change
Fatalities	221	189	-14.5%
Injuries	7,351	7,032	-4.3%
Severe Injuries	1,331	1,185	-11.0%
Fatal Crashes	198	161	-18.7%
Injury Crashes	5,227	4,972	-4.9%
Property Damage Only Crashes	15,538	15,013	-3.4%
Alcohol-Related Fatalities	92	88	-4.3%
Unbelted Fatalities	107	93	-13.1%

5

**SO WE KNOW WHERE WE WANT TO GO, AND WE BEGIN TO SEE HOW IT IS GOING.  
NOW LET'S LOOK AT WHAT JUST HAPPENED IN 2010...**

Percent Unbelted Fatalities:

2009 – 62.6%

2010 – 61.6%

% Change = -1.6%

### Current Year-to-Date Fatality Comparison

January 1 – June 6

	2010	2011	% Change
Fatalities	67	46	-31.3%
Fatal Crashes	51	42	-17.6%
Alcohol-Related Fatalities	20	12	-40.0%
Unbelted Fatalities	44	29	-34.1%

Preliminary data,  
subject to results from further investigation

6

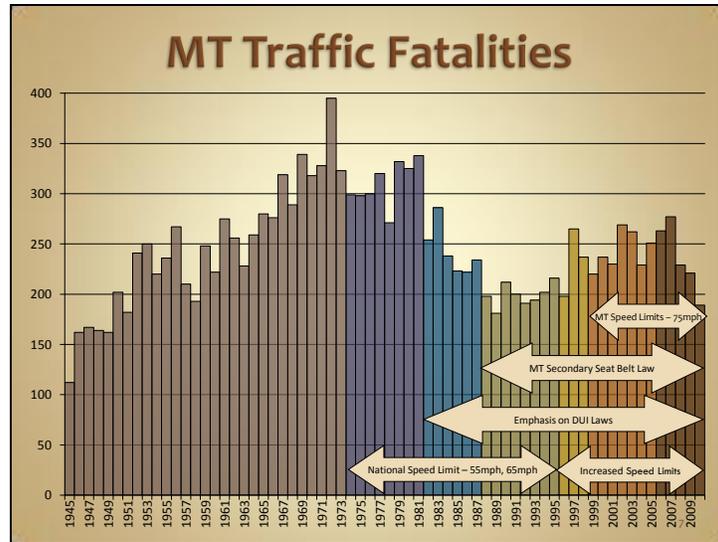
**LAST YEAR WE SAW DECLINES IN ALL BASIC CRASH AND INJURY CATEGORIES.  
HOW IS IT GOING SO FAR THIS YEAR?...**

Percent Unbelted Fatalities:

2010 – 74.6%

2011 – 65.9%

% Change = -11.6%



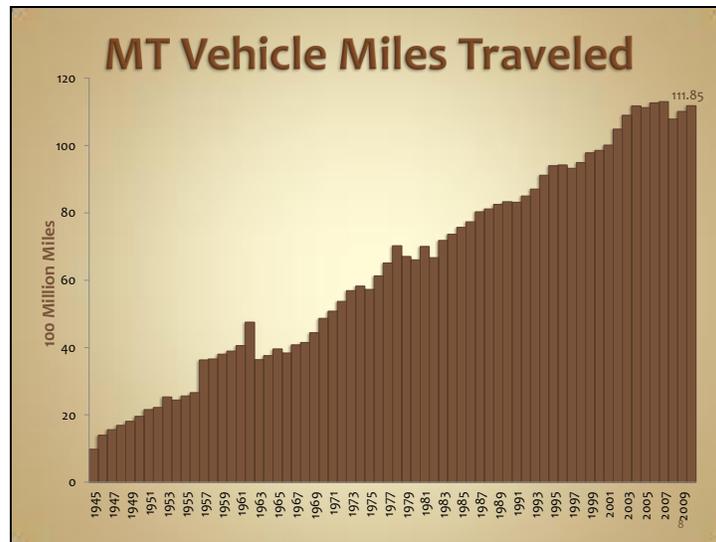
**NOW LET'S LOOK AT OUR FATALITY HISTORY, WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?**

Looking strictly at the number of fatalities is tricky, because we are dealing with so few events each year (under 300 fatalities per year for the last 25 years). Immediate impacts from laws like 0.08 BAC, open container and changes in the drinking age don't appear. This is often why we look at the combination of fatalities and incapacitating injuries. There are more of these severe injuries each year.

There are only four events that show a clear impact (speed legislation, DUI laws, seat belt law):

- DARK GRAY**— general increase that somewhat correspond to the increase in VMT
- PURPLE**— Emergency Highway Energy Conservation Act (March 1974, signed January 2, 1974): 55mph national speed limit in effect
- BLUE**— Tougher DUI laws and the changes in perception brought out by MADD and other prevention advocates (beginning in 1982/1983)
- OLIVE**— MCA 61-13-103: secondary seat belt law going into effect January 1, 1988  
Surface Transportation & Uniform Relocation Assistance Act (April 2, 1987): national speed limit increased to 65 on rural interstate highways
- YELLOW**— National Highway Designation Act (November 28, 1995): end of the national speed limit; MT daytime "reasonable & prudent", night 65mph
- ORANGE**— MCA 61-8-303: end of "reasonable & prudent", increased statutory speed limit; MT interstate 75mph
- DARK BROWN**— CHSP began, traffic safety stakeholders brought together to begin working together actively, toward a common goal

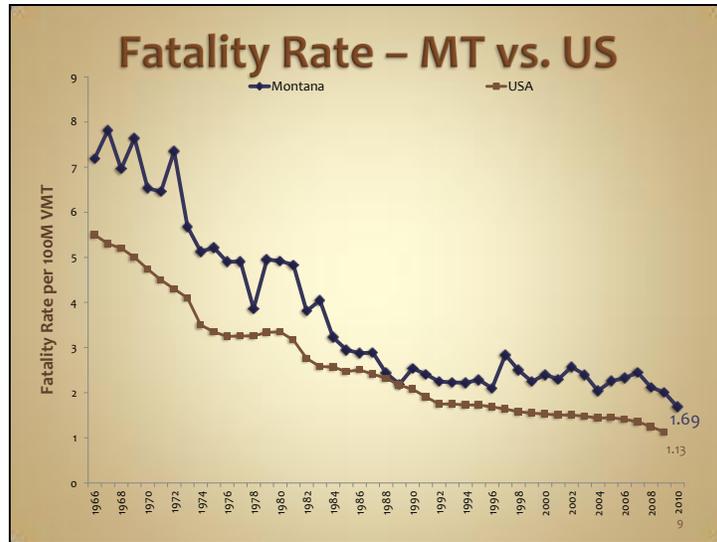
Slide 8



**SO WE'VE HAD UPS AND DOWNS IN OUR FATALITIES, HOW DOES THIS CORRELATE TO HOW MUCH WE DRIVE?**

Looking at the same time period, we have seen a continuous increasing trend in the number of vehicle miles traveled. There was a small decline in 2008, but 2009 saw an increase.

The 2010 VMT (11.185 billion miles traveled), is approximately the same number we saw in 2004.

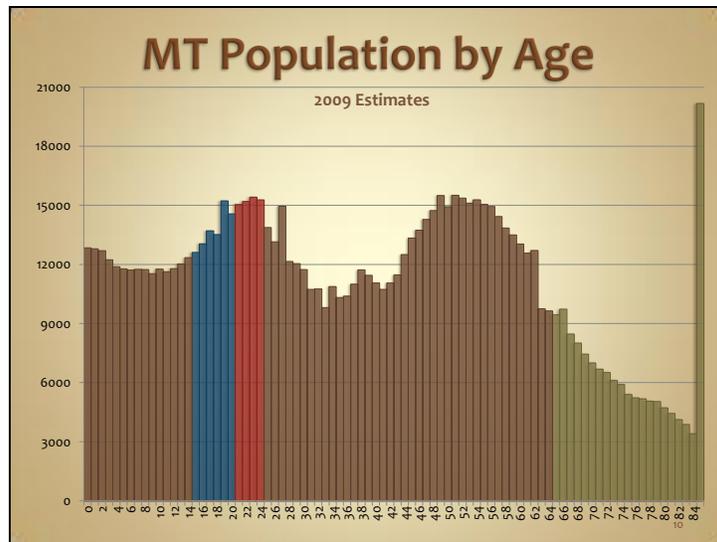


### HOW DO OUR FATALITIES COMPARE TO THE NATION?

There were 221 fatalities in 2009 and there were 189 in 2010. Although our fatality rate is quite a bit higher than the national rate, being a rural state plays a very large part of this. Based on 2008 data (the most current information published by NHTSA), the national rural fatality rate was 2.11. MT's 2009 rural fatality rate was higher (2.44), but this is certainly one explanation as to why MT's rate consistently ranks higher than the nation's. Since MT will never be an "urban" state, comparing us to the nation, as a whole, may continue to show us lacking. So long as we continue to see a decline in our own fatality rate, we must count this as a victory.

A certain and visibly apparent victory is in MT's alcohol-related fatalities as a percent of all fatalities, which will be shown to you later. The exciting news there is Montana is very close to the national alcohol-related fatality percent, the closest we've been since 2001, in fact.

As you can see, MT's fatality rate per 100M VMT is the lowest it has ever been (1.69). The national rate won't be released until later this year. This is the third year of decline, more than we've seen in a decade.



## WHAT DOES THE MONTANA POPULATION HAVE TO LOOK FORWARD TOO?

Four large groups of drivers...

### **BLUE (15-20)** - Young Drivers

There are fewer of these than there have been in the past number of years and the GDL program is well underway.

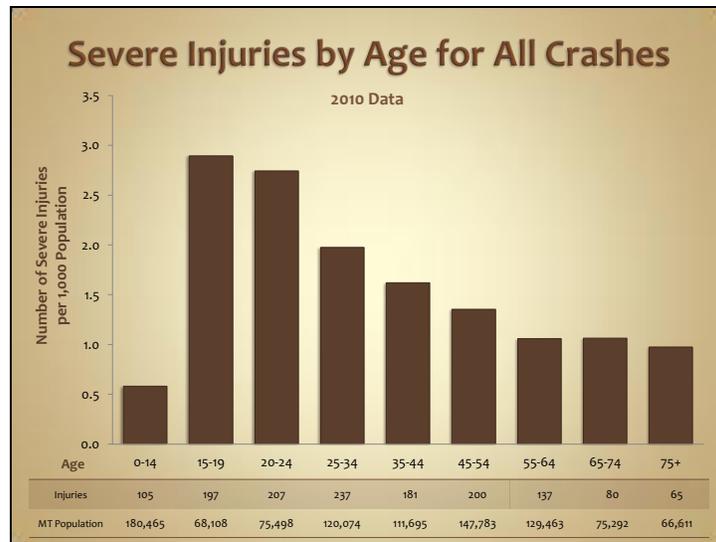
### **RED (21-24)** – New Drinkers, late college or just out of college.

We have a lot of these now, but in a couple of years the young drivers will move up into this group, hopefully with better educated driving experience under their belt (GDL), lots of media/educational messages supporting smart driving/riding decisions (drinking & driving don't mix, buckle up) and laws that back up those media messages.

### **Baby boomers** – starting to head toward the older driver category.

### **OLIVE (65+)** – Older Drivers

There are estimated to be over 20,000 people in Montana over the age of 85! According to the number of licensed drivers provided by DOJ/MVD, not even 9,000 (45%) of them have drivers licenses. But of the approximately 142,000 older drivers in Montana (age 65+), over 128,000 (90%) of them have licenses. In a rural state like MT, often these licenses are a must for our older population to live independent lifestyles. Their driving challenges are many and varied and we need to address them now, before the baby boomers move into this category of drivers.

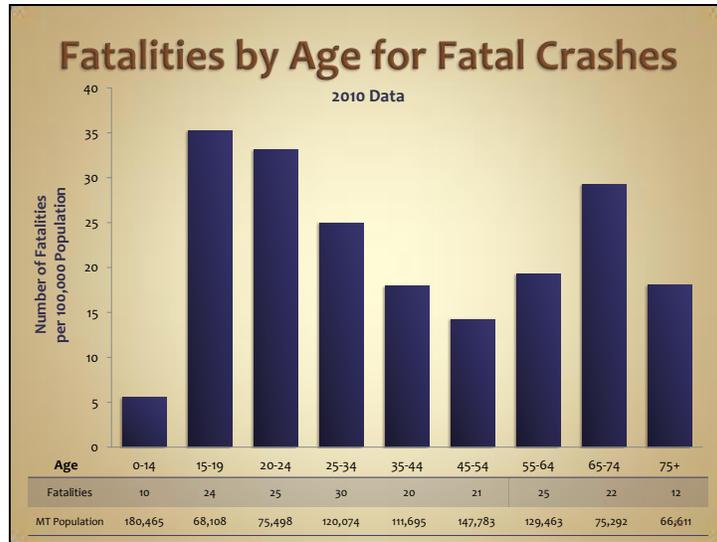


**BASED ON THOSE AGE NUMBERS, LET'S LOOK AT THE SEVERE INJURIES.**

Greatest number of severe injuries for their population:  
15-19 year olds... the “new” drivers & potentially their passengers  
Then there are the 20-24 year olds... the “new” drinkers

The highest number of severe injuries occurred in our 25-34 year olds, but their rate is lower than the younger group because of the number of people in this age category.

Also, keep in mind both the 15-19 and 20-24 year old age groups are only five-year groupings, the 25-34 group is a ten-year grouping. So for a five-year age span, we have almost the same number of injuries as we see in the older aged ten-year span. Too many of our young adults are getting severely injured in crashes!

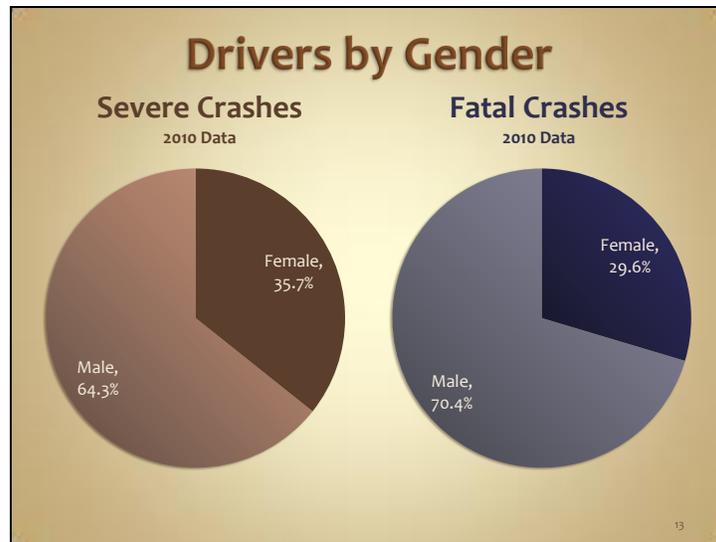


**AGAIN, BASED ON THE AGE GROUPS, WHO IN OUR POPULATION ARE DYING ON OUR ROADS THE MOST?**

Greatest number of fatalities for their population:  
Still, our young adults...15-24 year olds  
And our older age group...65-74

Just as was the case with severe injuries, the highest number of fatalities occurred in our 25-34 year olds, but their rate is lower than the younger group because of the number of people in this age category.

Also, keep in mind both the 15-19 and 20-24 year old age groups are only five-year groupings, the 25-34 group is a ten-year grouping. So for a five-year age span, we have almost the same number of injuries as we see in the older aged ten-year span.



**SO OUR YOUNG ADULTS ARE RECEIVING HORRIBLE INJURIES MORE OFTEN IN CRASHES THAN THE OTHER AGE GROUPS.**

**WHO IS DRIVING? MEN OR WOMEN?**

Montana's population is basically a 50-50 split in gender.

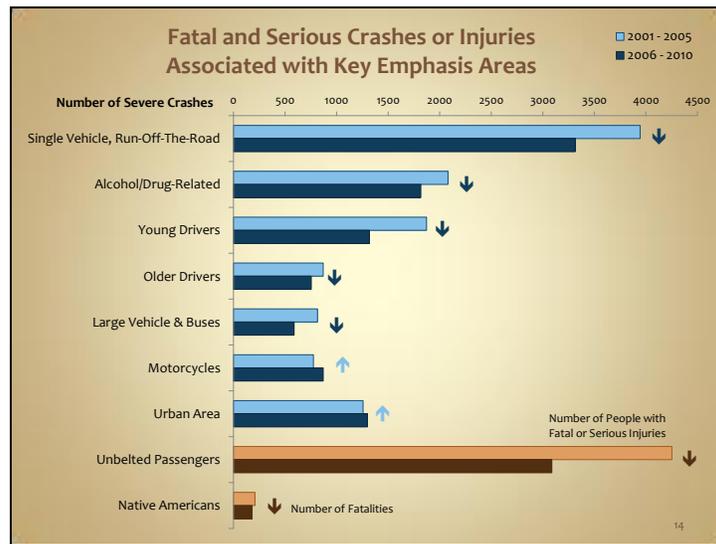
So we see an overrepresentation in the number of male drivers involved in crashes.

In all crashes (regardless of the severity), the male-female driver split is 60-40 (not shown in the charts).

As the severity of the crash increases, the percent of male drivers involved increases. The percent of female drivers involved in crashes (non-fatal or fatal) has stayed under 30% for many years.

There could be many different reasons for this.

- Men may drive more than women, we don't have VMT by gender of driver to verify this.
- Men may drive more recklessly than women.
- Men may drive more in rural locations than women.



**WE'VE SEEN SOME REALLY BASIC OVER-ARCHING NUMBERS.  
NOW LET'S LOOK INTO THE WEEDS...  
HERE IS A QUICK SUMMARY OF THE CHSP EMPHASIS AREAS...**

In keeping with the MT traffic safety goal, here are the emphasis areas focusing on the number of fatal and serious crashes or injuries.

The light blue and light brown bars are the total numbers from 2001 to 2005 (pre-CHSP), the dark blue and dark brown bars are the total numbers from 2006 to 2010 (now).

The unbelted passengers categories is person-related, so it shows the number of fatalities and serious injuries. The Native American category is also person-related, but only shows fatalities because we do not gather race information for non-fatal crashes.

Almost all categories saw a reduction in the number of fatal and serious crashes/injuries between the two 5-year time frames, except for motorcycle crashes and crashes occurring in urban areas. Although these areas saw increases in 2006-2010, the increases were very small (differences of less than 100 crashes).

Keep in mind many crashes can fall into multiple categories. For example...

An **older motorcycle rider** could be hit by **drunk young driver** who is **unbuckled**, and this crash has occurred in an **urban area**. This is an example of one crash that hits six of our emphasis areas. This may be taking it to the extreme, but it demonstrates how each of our emphasis areas are intertwined.

<b>Other 2010 Data Highlights</b>			
	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Pedestrian Injuries	179	136	-24.0%
Fatalities	15	8	-46.7%
Bicyclist Injuries	98	123	+25.5%
Fatalities	1	0	-100.0%
Animal-Involved Crashes	2,280	2,081	-8.7%
Fatal Crashes	5	9	+80%
Drivers Speeding in Crashes	1,311	1,236	-5.7%
Fatal Crashes	10	9	-10.0%
Inattentive Drivers in Crashes	3,586	3,297	-8.1%
Fatal Crashes	5	6	+20.0%
Drivers Using Cell Phones in Crashes	97	94	-3.1%
Fatal Crashes	0	1	-

**FINALLY, SOME NUMBERS FROM 2010 THAT AREN'T SPECIFIC EMPHASIS AREAS IN MT, BUT ARE IMPORTANT AREAS TO KEEP AN EYE ON, NONETHELESS...**

**OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN CRASHES (NON-OCCUPANTS)**

These two categories are very important. Although our numbers are not large for either category, the people involved don't have the protection of metal (and lots of plastic) surrounding them as they travel on or next to our roads.

**PEDESTRIAN-RELATED CRASHES**

Fewer pedestrians were injured or killed last year, compared to the year before.

**BIKE-RELATED CRASHES**

Although there were more bicyclist injuries last year, 2009 saw the lowest number of injuries in at least a decade. Last year was the first year since at least 1987 where no bicyclists were killed.

**ANOTHER TYPE OF CRASH, FAIRLY FREQUENT IN MT**

In a rural state populated by many animals, large and small, domestic and wild, we will always have to deal with them on our roads. They can be a minor inconvenience or a major threat.

**CRASHES INVOLVING ANIMALS**

These are only the reported crashes that produce damage of \$1000 or more. Some people will not report crashes with animals, so the actual number of crashes may be higher.

Injuries (2009-2010): 192 – 202

Fatalities (2009-2010): 5 – 6

In 2010, animal-involved crashes made up 10% of all crashes in MT, 2.9% of all injuries and 3.2% of all fatalities.

### **COMMON DRIVER-RELATED ISSUES**

It is important to examine this data with caution as it is the law enforcement investigator's professional judgment as to the apparent reason(s) for the crash. Each vehicle in a crash can have up to five contributing circumstances listed (including none listed). Two different investigators may look at the same crash and select different contributing circumstances.

### **SPEEDING-RELATED CRASHES**

Fewer drivers were marked as "exceeding stated speed limit" or "too fast for conditions" in 2010 than in 2009 for both all and fatal crashes. In 2010, this made up 3.8% of all drivers (1,236/32,188) in all crashes and 4.3% of drivers in fatal crashes (9/208).

### **INATTENTIVE DRIVING**

There are a lot of inattentive drivers. In 2010, this made up 10.2% of all drivers (3,297/32,188) and 2.9% of drivers in fatal crashes (6/208).

### **CELL PHONE-RELATED CRASHES**

This number is probably underreported. Who is really going to admit to using a cell phone? According to the numbers, this problem is disappearing, but in actuality it could be increasing. Not only are people not going to admit that they were gabbing or texting rather than paying attention to the road, but law enforcement are hesitant to mark the box unless there is hard proof that a cell phone was in use at or close to the time of the crash. The number of drivers noted as using the cell phone being a contributing circumstance has decreased since 2007. In 2010, this made up 0.3% of all drivers (94/32,188) and 0.5% of drivers in fatal crashes (1/208).

**MDT State Highway  
Traffic Safety Office**

Danielle Murphy  
(406) 444-3430  
dmurphy@mt.gov

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats.shtml>