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Wisconsin roadways see spike in traffic fatalities

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In the month of September, 63 people have died on Wisconsin roadways in motor vehicle accidents. That's 25 percent more deaths than during the same time period (September) last year, according to preliminary statistics from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

As of Sept. 30, 2015, 424 people have died on Wisconsin roadways this year.

This number includes:

- 68 motorcycle operators;

- Two motorcycle passengers;
- 40 pedestrians; and
- 13 bicyclists (a 300 percent increase in bike deaths).

Despite the spike this year, "Wisconsin traffic fatalities have seen a relatively consistent downward trend in recent years," Randy Romanski, the Safety Programs chief with the Wisconsin DOT, told Action 2 News.

The sharp increase in traffic deaths this year can't be attributed to one specific cause, according to Romanski, who said it's too early to tell if the recent speed limit increase to 70 MPH on Wisconsin interstates is a contributing factor.

But, Romanski said there are several known contributing factors to the increase in deaths on Wisconsin roadways, which include:

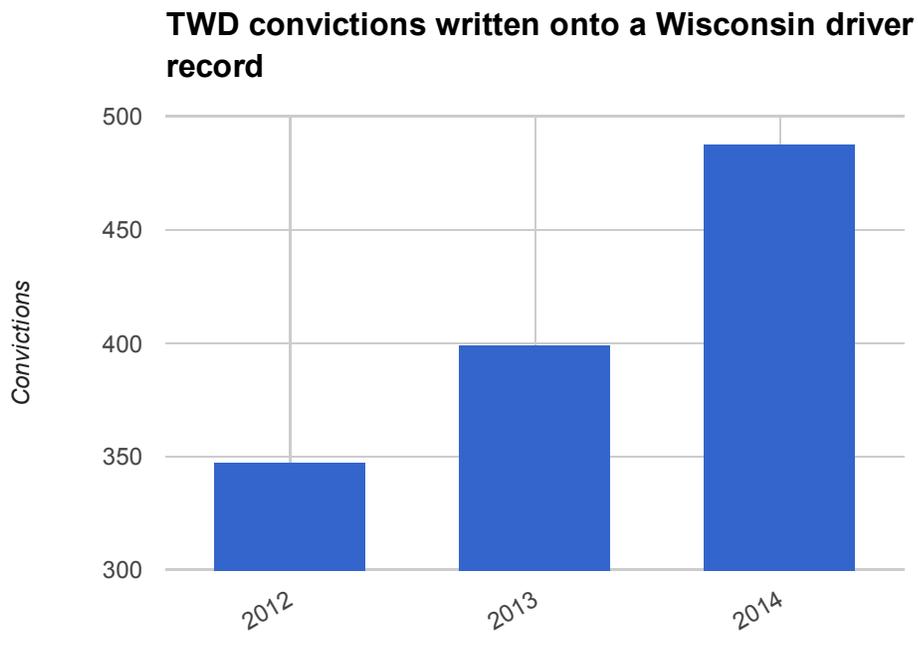
- Distracted driving (e.g. texting while driving);
- Not wearing seatbelts;
- Weather conditions; and
- Economic conditions (better economic conditions mean more people traveling on Wisconsin roadways).

Romanski has advice for Wisconsin motorists:

1. Never drive distracted. Don't text and drive, read/send emails, look at social media or engage in any activity that keeps your eyes off of the road.
2. Never drive impaired. (That includes use of prescription medications that can impact your driving, use of alcohol beyond the legal limit, or any use of illegal drugs).
3. Buckle up — even if driving a short distance.
4. Maintain the legal speed limit, and allow enough room in front of you.

"Those four factors can really help," Romanski said, noting that all of these fatalities were preventable.

Texting while driving convictions have increased substantially over the past two years.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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