U.S. Motor Vehicle Injury Facts

The Numbers

- Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for persons 1 to 34 years of age in the United States. They are the leading cause of injury death for all ages, accounting for nearly 44,000 deaths in 2001.
- In 2002, alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes accounted for 41% of all traffic-related deaths.
- Two out of five deaths among U.S. teens result from motor vehicle crashes. Per mile driven, teen drivers ages 16 to 19 are four times more likely than older drivers to crash.
- Children are particularly vulnerable to motor vehicle crashes. Of the 459 children ages 4 years and younger who were fatally injured in 2002, 40% were completely unrestrained.

The Cost

- In 2000, medical costs due to injury exceeded $21 billion for motor vehicle-related injuries. This accounted for almost 20% of all medical costs attributable to injury.
- In addition to direct medical costs, injuries contribute to higher insurance premiums, more time away from work for caregivers (productivity loss at work), and other financial costs to individuals, their families, their communities, and society as a whole.
- In its publication *The Economic Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes*, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that the total cost of alcohol-related crashes exceeded $50 billion in 2000. In 2002, the estimated economic cost of police-reported crashes (fatal and nonfatal) involving drivers ages 15 to 20 was $40.8 billion.

Children Riding With Drinking Drivers

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages one year or older. One in four of these crash deaths involves a driver who has consumed alcohol. Between 1997 and 2002, 68% of U.S. children killed in alcohol-related crashes were riding in the same vehicle as the drinking driver. These children were less likely to be properly restrained than children who died in crashes that did not involve alcohol. Strong enforcement of impaired driving laws, child safety seat laws, and safety belt laws could further reduce child passenger deaths.

Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries Are Preventable

- If restraint use among motor vehicle occupants ages five years and older increased to 100%, an additional 9,000 lives would be saved and 160,000 nonfatal injuries would be prevented each year.
- Mass media campaigns that are carefully planned and executed can be effective in preventing alcohol-impaired driving. School-based educational programs decrease the number of young people who ride with alcohol-impaired drivers (www.thecommunityguide.org).
- Between 1982 and 2001, alcohol-related fatal crash rates among drivers 16 to 20 years of age decreased almost 60%, suggesting that prevention measures targeting underage drinkers have been effective.
- Multifaceted community-based booster seat campaigns increase booster seat use among child passengers in motor vehicles. Fifteen months after a CDC-funded campaign began, booster seat use had nearly doubled to 26% in the communities where the campaign was implemented.

To learn more about motor vehicle injuries in the United States, visit www.cdc.gov/injury