



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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Safe Holiday Travel on Missouri's Roadways

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, many Missouri families plan on traveling to visit family or are preparing for their own visitors. With extra cars on Missouri's roadways during what can often be inclement weather conditions, it is especially important to take extra safety precautions when getting behind the wheel of a car during the busy holiday traveling season.

The Missouri Department of Transportation has greatly improved Missouri's roadways in recent years, resulting in fewer accidents. In 2004, the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety took an aggressive approach to help curb traffic deaths and injuries by creating Missouri's "Blueprint for Safer Roadways" (www.savemolives.com), with the ultimate goal to reduce traffic fatalities to 850 or fewer by the year 2012.

Ever since Missouri began maintaining traffic crash data in 1966, fatalities have continually reached at least 850 each year. Since 1997, more than 12,625 people have lost their lives and almost 800,000 have been injured on Missouri roadways. These numbers are almost equal to the combined populations of St. Louis, Jefferson City and Kansas City! Between 2005 and 2007, there were 491 fatalities just in Kansas City alone.

However, in 2006, after the Blueprint went into effect, Missouri experienced the largest fatality reduction in the nation. And in 2007, the state experienced less than 1,000 fatalities for the first time in years. There have been 720 fatalities to-date in 2009, which is a 12 percent decrease from this time last year. We are well on our way to achieving our 2012 goal of reducing traffic fatalities to 850 or fewer.

The Blueprint outlines specific strategies to increase safety for Missouri drivers,

including:

- Maintaining and enhancing existing safety laws.
- Increasing enforcement on targeted crash corridors.
- Increasing public education and information on traffic safety issues.
- Expanding the installation of shoulder and centerline rumble strips/stripes.
- Expanding, improving and maintaining roadway visibility features (pavement markings, signs, lighting, etc.).
- Effectively deterring, identifying, arresting, and adjudicating alcohol and other drug-impaired drivers and pedestrians.
- Expanding installation and maintenance of roadway shoulders.
- Removing and/or shielding fixed objects along roadside right of way.
- Improving and expanding intersection safety with the use of innovative engineering designs (e.g., j-turns, roundabouts), technology and enforcement.
- Improving curve recognition through the use of signs, markings and pavement treatments.

While the state is working to improve roadway safety for Missouri drivers, remember, safety begins with individuals. Simple actions, such as buckling up, not driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, giving full attention to your driving and not exceeding the speed limit will decrease the likelihood that you will be involved in a crash—or if you are, these steps should help your chances of survival to be dramatically improved. For more information on road safety in the greater Kansas City area, visit www.modot.mo.gov/kansascity/safe_driving.htm.

If you have any comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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Contact Information

Capitol Office
State Capitol Building
Room 319
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Website:
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>

Phone Number:
888.711.9278 (toll-free)
573.751.1464

Fax:
573.751.8442