

# Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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## Potential for deer crashes will be high again this fall

Each fall, deer become more prevalent and their movements even more unpredictable along highways and rural roads throughout Wisconsin. October and November are the mating season for deer. As a result, deer are more active especially at dusk and dawn when they move back and forth between their bedding and feeding areas.

As they roam, deer often will dart unexpectedly into the path of vehicles. To avoid a collision with deer, drivers must be attentive and cautious at all times, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) officials advise.

Last year, law enforcement agencies reported a total of 16,947 deer versus motor vehicle crashes. Dane County had the most motor vehicle versus deer crashes reported in 2010 with 854. Shawano County had the second-most with 719 followed by Waukesha County with 687. In Shawano and Green Lake counties, more than half of all reported crashes in 2010 involved deer. Deer are the third most commonly struck object in Wisconsin traffic crashes (behind collisions with another vehicle or a fixed object).

“To avoid deer crashes, drivers must slow down when they see deer in the area. If you see one deer, there are probably more nearby that could dash in front of your vehicle,” says Randy Romanski, chief of safety programs for WisDOT’s Bureau of Transportation Safety. “If you can’t avoid a deer, it’s safer to hit the brakes and hit the deer than to swerve suddenly and try to miss it. If you swerve, you risk losing control of your vehicle and rolling over or hitting another car or a fixed object, like a tree.”

Motorcyclists must be especially careful because collisions with deer can be fatal to motorcycle drivers and passengers. Motorcycles were involved in 12 of the 13 fatal deer versus motor vehicle crashes in 2010, according to Romanski.

The WisDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety offers the following advice to prevent deer crashes:

- Be on the lookout for deer, eliminate distractions while driving, and slow down in early morning and evening hours—the most active time for deer.
- Always wear your safety belt—there are fewer and less severe injuries in vehicle-deer crashes when safety belts are worn.
- If you see a deer by the side of the road, slow down and blow your horn with one long blast to frighten the deer away.
- When you see one deer, look for another one—deer seldom run alone.
- If you see a deer looming in your headlights, don’t expect the deer to move away—headlights can confuse a deer and cause the animal to freeze.
- Brake firmly when you notice a deer in or near your path.

- Do not swerve—it can confuse the deer as to where to run—and cause you to lose control and hit a tree or another car.
  - The one exception to the “don’t swerve” advice applies to motorcyclists. On a motorcycle, you should slow down, brake firmly and then swerve if necessary to avoid hitting the deer. If you must swerve, always try to stay within your lane to avoid hitting other objects.
- If you hit a deer, get your vehicle off the road if possible, and then call a law enforcement agency. Walking on a highway is dangerous, so stay in your vehicle if you can.
- Don’t try to move the animal if it is still alive. The injured deer could hurt you.

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