

SPEEDING: Is it a Traffic Safety Concern ?

North Dakota Fatalities

Speed-related fatalities are a concern nationwide, and North Dakota is no exception. Of the 105 fatal crashes in 2005, 35 or 1/3 of them were speed-related. From 2001-2005, the average portion of fatal ND crashes where speed was a factor was 35 percent. That trend has been fairly consistent since 1996.

When comparing North Dakota to all other states (on average for 2001-2005), speeding-related fatal crashes are high. North Dakota ranks 33rd among the continental states and the District of Columbia in number of vehicles in fatal, speed-related crashes per licensed driver. This means, when looking at fatal crashes compared to the number of people driving in each state, 32 states rank better in fatal crashes. Only 16 rank worse. While North Dakota does not have large crash fatality numbers, the number of fatalities compared to the number of drivers is relatively high.

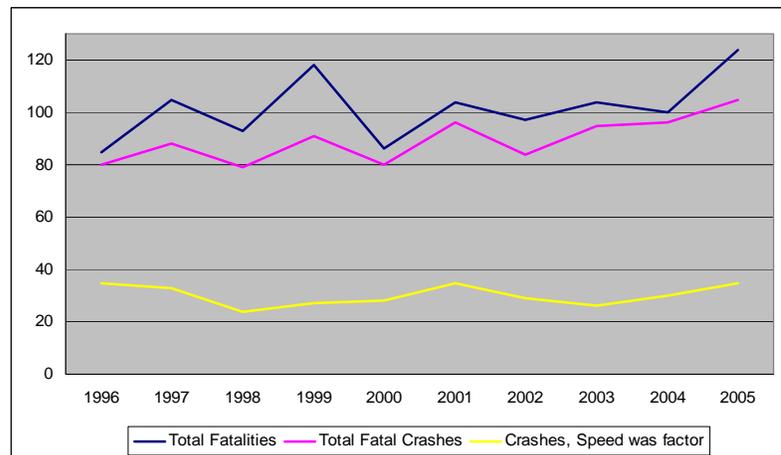
Cost Nationwide

- **\$40.4 billion** - the total cost associated with speed-related crashes for 2000
- That is **\$76,865** per minute!
- With 37,526 fatal crashes in 2000, that is **\$1,076,000** per crash

Source: Speeding: Traffic Safety Facts, 2005 Data. NHTSA

Speeding is a traffic safety concern. In 2005, speeding was a factor in almost 1/3 of fatal crashes in the United States (FARS, 2005). This is also true for North Dakota. When examining fatal vehicle crashes from 2001 to 2005, speeding was a factor in 35 percent of those accidents. The North Dakota Department of Transportation lists “speed/too fast for conditions” as the third most common contributing factor in 2005 fatal crashes after “other” and “alcohol/drugs/medication.” Interestingly, of the accidents that were related to speed in 2005, 92 percent occurred on rural roadways (NHTSA, FARS definition/data, 2005).

ND Speed-related Fatal Crashes, 1996-2005



Source: ND Crash Facts, April 2006

Rural Challenges

North Dakota, as a rural state, faces logistical issues related to emergency response to incidents such as traffic crashes. When car crashes do occur on rural roads, the response time of an emergency responder may mean the difference between life or death. Traffic crashes cause property damage, injury and death. What can be done to decrease these events?

Speed management is one answer. The greater the speed someone is driving, the less reaction time there is for the driver to respond to events occurring outside the vehicle. Also consider the laws of physics in relation to the severity of a crash: Kinetic energy of a moving vehicle is equal to the function of mass and velocity squared (Synthesis of Safety Research). More simply, when a car moves faster the potential for a fatal crash increases.

What About Traffic Fines?

Speeding penalties vary state to state and city to city. The following table shows speed violation schedules for various North Dakota cities, as well as a representative city from Minnesota, South Dakota and Montana.

Could there be a relationship between traffic fine amounts and speeding? While the City of Fargo has implemented higher speeding fines as a home rule charter city privilege, the North Dakota Highway Patrol fines seem low compared to other cities in the region.

Speeding Fine Comparison

City	10 MPH Over	15 MPH Over	20 MPH Over	25 MPH Over	30 MPH Over
Billings	\$95	\$95	\$95	\$95	\$95
Bismarck	\$40	\$60	\$85	\$115	\$145
Fargo	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$150	\$175
Grand Forks	\$51	\$51	\$61	\$81	\$111
Moorhead	\$122	\$142	\$142	\$152	\$182
ND HWY Patrol*	\$50	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$150
Sioux Falls	\$79	\$99	\$119	\$119	\$179
West Fargo	\$25	\$35	\$45	\$60	\$85
AVERAGE	\$62	\$75	\$87	\$102	\$128

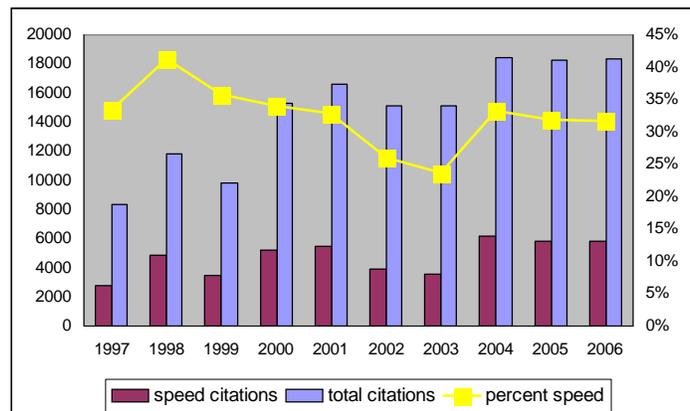
Source: Fargo Police Department Non-Criminal Traffic Fine Increase Proposal. February 7, 2006.

City of Fargo: ND Example

The city of Fargo Police Department gives out thousands of citations each year. The Fargo Police Department, like all police departments, strives to make streets safe. Traffic citations are a part of this work. In Fargo, speeding has comprised roughly 32 percent of all citations given during the past three years.

Consequently, the Fargo Police Department spends a large amount of time and money attempting to curb this negative traffic safety behavior. The trends for speeding violations have remained fairly constant from 1997 to 2006, with a maximum of 41 percent in 1998, dipping to about 23 percent in 2003.

City of Fargo Citations



Source: Fargo Police Department Citations System Report 1997-2006.

What can be done?

Speeding is a serious issue, and it needs to be addressed at various levels. Speed management is an important traffic safety tool. A speed management program is a complex mix of variables including factors such as speed limits, road design, vehicle design, risk preferences, safety perceptions and law enforcement. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration stresses the importance of speed management. They indicate that speed is a problem across the U.S., but solutions will need to be applied at a local level for effectiveness. In their Highway Safety Program Guideline on speed management, NHTSA states, "The success of a speed management program is enhanced by coordination and cooperation among the engineering, enforcement, and education disciplines." (NHTSA, 2006). The ultimate goal for promoting improved speed management efforts is to reduce injuries, crashes and deaths that are related to speeding behaviors.



The Rural Transportation Safety and Security Center is a program of the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute at NDSU.

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