

## National Seat Belt Day

Distracted driving is one of the main reasons for car crashes. If you are engaged in another activity, or your thoughts are somewhere else other than the road, that will impact your ability to drive safely. Distracted driving is no better than driving under the influence. Teens Toward Zero Deaths educates the importance of regulating your emotions before you get behind the wheel of a car and to be a good passenger in a car. Passengers can affect how someone drives well or if they are a distraction and they contribute to 50% of all the teen fatalities on our roadways.



Essential Health participated in educating the importance of wearing seat belts by displaying the Lein Crash trailer and its story at their facility in Fosston, MN the week of November 11-15, 2024. This truck was involved in a crash with an unbelted driver that was thrown from the vehicle and resulted in his death. This is a sobering reminder of how we all need to buckle up every time we are in a vehicle.

## Toward Zero Deaths State Conference 2024

The 2024 TZD Statewide Conference consisted of 40 concurrent sessions held on October 22-23, 2024. The conference highlighted the latest trends and traffic safety initiatives and featured expert guests sharing a cross-section of topics from all four E's; enforcement, engineering, education, and EMS. There were 824 attendees ranging from 18 different states. Enforcement was the biggest stakeholder designation at 48% of the total attendees. Overall comments were extremely positive with many suggestions for topics for next year. Next year's TZD State Conference will be held on October 21-22, 2025 at Mystic Lake Center in Prior Lake, MN. Mark your calendars for next year!



## Enforcement Update:

- DWI: Nov 27-30; Dec 5-7; 12-14; 19-21; 26-28; 31, 2024
- DWI (optional): Dec 8-9, 2025—Superbowl
- DWI (optional): March 14-17, 2025—St. Patrick's Day
- Distracted: April 1-30, 2025

- In 2024 through November 24, there were 415 traffic-related deaths on Minnesota roadways. This is 18 percent more than at this time last year (353), five more than in 2022 (410).
- Unbelted fatalities (97) are 41 percent more than last year (69), 31 percent more than in 2022 (74).

## Impact Teen Drivers Education

This Fall, the Minnesota State Patrol and the NW Toward Zero Deaths have been busy presenting the Impact Teen Drivers (ITD) curriculum to the 10th grade students in Goodridge, Grygla, Thief River Falls, Fosston, Lake of the Woods, Nevis, and Laporte, and Kelliher. All the students have been very receptive and interactive with the presenters and we have had many teachers and principals watch the educational presentations and give us positive feedback. We are scheduled for Park Rapids in December and continue to bring on more schools to share the ITD education. Teen crashes have increased 46% over last year, so this we are on the right track educating sharing this teen traffic safety education. If you would like to see this in your high school, please contact Sue Johnson @ [susan.marie.johnson@state.mn.us](mailto:susan.marie.johnson@state.mn.us) or call 218-766-5943.



## Older Driver Safety Awareness Month

Are you an older driver? If not, you probably know one — a parent, grandparent or neighbor down the street. Between 2013 and 2022, the U.S. population of people 65 and older increased by 30%, and in 2022 the number of people 65 and older killed in traffic crashes made up 19% of all traffic fatalities. During Older Driver Safety Awareness Week (December 2–6, 2024), we remind you that simply getting older doesn't mean it's time to hang up your keys, but you should evaluate how you — or loved ones — drive. Also, when you see an older driver driving slow or cautious, give them time, space, and grace. We will all be in that world sooner or later.

## Mark your Calendars!

- Apr 30, 2025—Teen TZD Conference—Evangelical Free Church in TRF
- May 1, 2025—NW Regional Workshop—Thief River Falls Legacy Center
- Oct 22 & 23, 2024—TZD State Conference—October 21 & 22, 2025 (T-W), Mystic Lake Center, Prior Lake, MN

Toward Zero Deaths Northwest Regional Newsletter

Sue Johnson, Towards Zero Deaths Coordinator – NW Region

248 125th Ave

Thief River Falls, MN 56701

218-766-5943

