

# Urban sprawl puts drivers on collision course with deer

BY JEFF COUNTS  
STAFF WRITER

While the 1.7 million hunters in the state killed 288,000 deer during the 2002 season, Michigan drivers bagged 66,993 in car/deer collisions during 2001.

According to the Farmington Hills Police Department, 19 vehicle versus animal accidents occurred in the past year. The department does not record specific car/deer figures, but a spokesperson said most of the accidents are of that nature.

Although deer hunting accidents are rare, the number of motorists killed in car/deer crashes was 11, while 2,100 people were injured, according to Nancy Cain, AAA Michigan spokesperson.

"That included two motorcyclists killed," she said.

Urban sprawl in Farmington

Hills and in other developing communities is putting motorists on a collision course with the state's deer population, which numbers about 2 million, she said.

"People just aren't used to them in the newer suburbs," she said. "They just have to get used to them."

AAA is looking at the warning systems available, including the bumper whistle that is supposed to frighten deer away from cars. That system, though, hasn't proven to be totally effective. Putting deer warning traffic signs in suburban areas probably wouldn't be of much help, Cain said, because "there are already so many signs."

"The best way to avoid hitting a deer is to be alert," she said. "That's what AAA advises drivers."

And when it comes to striking a deer with your car, you're

better off hitting the animal than anything else.

She said too often drivers swerve to avoid hitting the animal and instead collide with other vehicles or trees. Such crashes put human life in danger. A AAA survey revealed that one in three drivers doesn't know what to do during a car/deer crash.

"Keep your hands on the wheel and hit the deer," she said.

And don't try to move an injured deer off the road.

"People are injured by the deer when attempting to move them," she said.

The aftermath of the collisions also take a financial toll. It costs insurance firms and drivers \$130 million annually to make repairs to vehicles involved in such crashes, she said. The average cost per vehicle is \$2,000.



**Turkey trotters**  
The Power Middle School Annual Turkey Trot capped off a weeklong effort that raised \$2,200 for the Food Bank of Oakland County. Over 100 students and adults solicited donations and participated in the one-mile Turkey Trot. Mr. Ross' and Mrs. Mammina's students coordinated the event which included lunch collections and Tie Day to supplement funds raised through the Turkey Trot.

## Southeast Michigan traffic accidents down

Southeast Michigan experienced more than 13,000 fewer traffic crashes in 2001 than in 2000, but 20 more fatalities, according to 2001 Southeast Michigan Traffic Crash Facts, a report released by SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

The report contains important statistical information about all traffic crashes reported in Southeast Michigan in 2001, and also focuses on injury traffic crashes, fatal traffic crashes, alcohol-involved traffic crashes, vehicle-deer crashes, young-driver traffic crashes, elderly-driver traffic crashes and truck/bus traffic crashes.

Sections at the end of the report contain data about safety-belt use and holiday traffic crashes. The main objective of this report is to provide useful data to aid local communities in their efforts to improve traffic safety.

In 2001, there were 180,739 crashes in Southeast Michigan, a 6.8 percent decrease from the 193,955 crashes reported in 2000. The seven-county region totals are 45.1 percent of the total crashes in the State of Michigan. The state total was 400,813 for 2001, down from 2000's total of 424,867.

The crash rate - the number

of traffic crashes per million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) - decreased in the region. The overall crash rate in Southeast Michigan was 3.98 crashes per million VMT in 2001, down from 4.39 crashes per million VMT in 2000, despite the fact that vehicle miles traveled increased from 44,167 million miles in 2000 to 45,460 million miles in 2001.

The report analyzes all traffic crashes by county; severity; crash type; age and gender of driver; rate of crash involvement by age group; and by month, day and hour.

Highlights include:

- There were 470 fatal crashes in Southeast Michigan in 2001, a 4.4 percent increase from 2000.
- Southeast Michigan saw an increase in the number of fatal traffic crashes in 2001 after experiencing a drop in fatal crashes in 2000. Fatal traffic crashes and traffic-crash fatalities decreased in the state as a whole.
- The number of reported injury crashes per million VMT stayed below one for the second straight year in Southeast Michigan at .90 crashes per million VMT, and continued to decrease in the State of Michigan at .84 crashes per

million VMT for the sixth consecutive year.

- Nearly 84 percent of belted drivers escaped injury altogether, but only 57 percent of non-belted drivers were not injured at all. Drivers in the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups were least likely to use restraints; more than twice as many males and females were not wearing their safety belts at the time of the crash.
- There were 6,314 crashes in Southeast Michigan that involved alcohol during 2001, down from 7,022 crashes in 2000.
- This marked a continued decrease in the number of alcohol-involved traffic crashes in the region.
- The complete report, 2001 Southeast Michigan Traffic Crash Facts, is available from SEMCOG Information Services, (313)961-4266 or in PDF format on SEMCOG's Web Site - www.semco.org.
- Traffic crash data used in the report were received from the Michigan Department of State Police, Criminal Justice Information Center.
- These data are combined with crash data from previous years to illustrate trends and provide a more complete picture of traffic crashes in Southeast Michigan.

### CLARIFICATION

In two recent stories regarding Vincent Pastue, who has been offered the job of Farmington city manager, his current employment was incorrectly reported. He is county administrator for Isabella County.

Also, in Sunday's paper, a front page photograph of a building fire should have been attributed to Vicky MacDonald.

## Red Cross drive slated for Jan. 8

As the need for blood grows critical at area hospitals, the American Red Cross will hold a winter blood drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8, at the Farmington Hills Holiday Inn, on 38123 W. 10 Mile.

Turn-outs are traditionally low during the holidays, when the need is actually greater due to accidents and illnesses.

Anyone who is at least 17, weighs at least 110 pounds and is in good health can donate. The entire process, from registration to donation and light refreshments, takes about an hour.

To schedule an appointment, call (517) 545-7712 or (877) 505-9437. Walk-ins are also welcome.

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