



**TOWARD ZERO DEATHS**  
Because your life counts

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## **Traffic Safety Myth Busters**

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Acknowledge Jay Heitpas (Hip-us)

Acknowledge DPS OTS staff & leadership

Acknowledge DOT OTST staff & leadership



We have made a lot of progress these past 10 years since TZD has been implemented in the state. Rather than working in our respective “silos” we have been integrating the “Es,” which has greatly enhanced our efforts. It’s everything and everybody working together, not just state entities, not just counties, not just locals. Not working in silos, but in partnership with one another. That’s how we cut our traffic-related deaths in nearly half these past 10 years.

For the purposes of this presentation, we will focus on efforts around the state around distracted driving, and not so much on the number of citations and evaluation that went along with the various campaigns.



The Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Program has TZD decals available for purchase. The decals can be used to show your organization’s commitment to the TZD goal of reducing death and serious injuries on our roadways and are part of TZD’s efforts to create a traffic safety culture in which traffic fatalities are no longer acceptable.

Several companies throughout the state, including **North Memorial Hospital, Safeway Driving School, and Northfield Hospital** have already purchased these decals for display on their company vehicles. North Memorial Health Care partnered with Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths program partners to have decals of the TZD logo made and displayed on their fleet. This includes nine helicopters and 140 vehicles. Safeway Driving School added the TZD decal to their 32 vehicles.



## Dept. of Transportation Fleet



In addition, the Minnesota Department of Transportation added the TZD decal to approximately 2,000 fleet vehicles. Other organizations are also in process.

You can order the TZD decals for your vehicles as well by contacting your regional TZD coordinator.

[www.towardzerodeaths.org](http://www.towardzerodeaths.org)



<http://www.towardzerodeaths.org/marketing/marketing-collateral>

TZD has been established as an official traffic safety program nationally. It was rolled out in March of 2015 (last year). Just think about that – our oldest TZD region in Minnesota is having it's 12<sup>th</sup> annual workshop this year, and nationally, it is just beginning.

They also put together a TZD video, showcasing the four “Es.” We didn't get a chance to show it at the statewide TZD conference last year, so we are showing it at all the regional workshops. So let's take a look...

The National Strategy on Highway Safety provides a platform of consistency for state agencies, private industry, national organizations and others to develop safety plans that prioritize traffic safety culture and promote the national TZD vision.

**Myth:** “Driving the speed limit on a snowy day (or inclement weather) is safe.”



Of course, we all know you need to drive for conditions, and that the speed limit is the Maximum LIMIT.



**Myth:** “I can just peek at my phone once in a while, that’s ok! I’m doing it safely!”



Photo of a motorcycle hit in stopped traffic—driver behind was texting.



**Myth:** “I drive better when I’m drunk, because I pay more attention.”



Drinking slows your reaction time and you have slower motor coordination skills. Obviously, if you get pulled over, you did something wrong.

**Myth:** “I see another vehicle approaching the intersection, but I can beat it to get through.”



Drivers can underestimate speed and gaps in traffic.

This photo shows a semi driver who saw another semi approaching, but thought his speed would beat it through the intersection. This was a fatal crash.

## Myth: “People without valid licenses don’t drive.”



According to Driver Vehicle Services in Minnesota, research has shown that at least 70 percent of revoked or suspended drivers drive illegally. National research shows more than 50 to 70 percent of these types of drivers are driving illegally.

4/12/16

Ms. Hernandez - research has shown that at least 70 percent of revoked or suspended drivers drive illegally. However, I do not have access to the numbers to support this statement.

So I believe that the statement that “People without valid licenses don’t drive” is a myth.

- Joan Kopcinski, Minnesota Driver Services Director



**Myth:** “Most traffic-related deaths occur at the hospital.”

Not true - 2/3 of all fatalities are pronounced at the scene of a crash. This highlights the importance of getting the Jaws of Life quickly to the scene as well as Auto-launching helicopters. Setting up the statewide trauma system has also be critical to getting patients to the RIGHT level of trauma hospital versus the closest hospital.

Therefore EMS care interacts with 1/3 of all deaths (that were transported to a hospital for care, where they ultimately die.)  
- Brad Estochen (2016)

**Myth:** “An EMS worker is more likely to contract a blood born disease (hepatitis, HIV, etc.) when responding to a crash than be in a motor vehicle crash themselves.”



Which is higher – the probability of an EMS worker contracting a blood born disease (hepatitis, HIV, etc.) or being involved in a motor vehicle crash as a driver, passenger or responder to an incident. ANSWER: being involved in a motor vehicle crash is more likely.

This is where the “Scene Safe” training plays a role. First responders in rural areas many times are part-time or volunteers. They are thinking of the patient first and not themselves. So getting them the training on how to stay safe when responding to a crash can be critical.

(Source: Brad Estochen, 2016)

## Myth: “Cops have quotas.”



**“Do you know why I pulled you over?”**

**“Because you have to extort me to maintain you and your boss’ lush salaries.”**

Actually, there is a state statute that prohibits law enforcement agencies from establishing quotas.

But during TZD enforcement waves, there is an expectation that peace officers are looking for infractions that pertain to the focused enforcement.

As Donna Berger, our state TZD co-chair said, “Unfortunately, there is no shortage of interactions because of people making poor choices.”

And State Patrol Captain Hanson told me, “We don’t have a quota – we can write as many tickets as we want!”

**169.985 TRAFFIC CITATION QUOTA PROHIBITED.**

A law enforcement agency may not order, mandate, require, or suggest to a peace officer a quota for the issuance of traffic citations, including administrative citations authorized under section [169.999](#), on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly basis.

(statute provide by Lt. Jason Engeldinger)





**Myth:** “It’s okay to drive while using medications if your doctor has prescribed them for you.”

As Lt. Don Marose said, “**There is no ‘hall pass’ for driving under the influence. If you are impaired, you are violating the law.**”

**Myth:** “Those arrested for controlled substance impaired driving usually have alcohol in their systems too.”



No, the latest research found only 28% had alcohol on board too. (Susie Palmer, 2016)

**Myth:** “A 4-way stop is safer than a roundabout.”



Roundabout move traffic faster and if crashes occur, usually they are property damage only. Intersections have higher crash rates and are more severe.

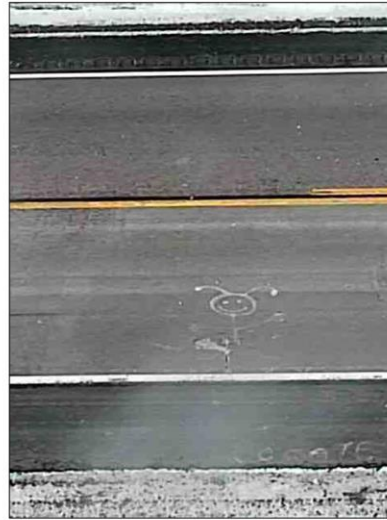
From Susan Youngs – Myth Busters wanted to know whether the traditional American four-way stop is better than the UK roundabout when it comes to the flow of traffic. The answer may surprise some drivers if they've never tried both.

<http://www.wimp.com/testroundabout/>

15 minute tests for law enforcement directing traffic, drivers going through a 4-way stop and then going through a roundabout. The results were: 369 cars made it through with law

enforcement directing traffic, 385 cars made it through the 4-way stop and 460 cars for the round-a-bout – that’s a 20 percent increase when comparing just the 4-way vs. roundabout!

**Myth:**  
“The lower the  
speed limit,  
the safer the  
road will be.”



False – a road is safest when the speed limit is realistic and gets all drivers to “harmonize.”

(Source: Derek Leuer, MnDOT OTST)

**Myth:** “A traffic signal will always make an intersection safer.”



False – In most situations, signals actually increase the number of crashes.

**Myth:**

“Stops signs are always the answer to stopping crashes at rural intersections.”



**A study found installing stop signs on lesser-traveled roads didn't improve safety.** Over regulating traffic can result in drivers ignoring critical signage where it is essential, leading to the possibility of more crashes. A vast majority of drivers on lesser-traveled gravel roads are local drivers who travel these same roads at least once per week.

In 2005, an Iowa State University study showed that there is “no statistical difference in the safety performance of ultra-low-volume stop-controlled and uncontrolled intersections”.

In the United States, the regulation at an intersection is referred to as the “Right-of-Way Rule”. This rule states that an entering driver must yield to vehicles already in the intersection. If two vehicles are approaching an intersection at the same time, the



driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right. At uncontrolled intersections, every driver has the responsibility to approach the intersection safely and follow the “Right-of-Way-Rule” and drivers should incorporate this practice each time they approach any intersection.

County or city engineers periodically review these types of situations to assure the safest solution for the traveling public. If you encounter an uncontrolled rural intersection remember:

Most importantly, remember to yield and be on the lookout for opposing traffic. If you can't see, don't go!

### Myth:

“You can’t get a ticket when you’re keeping up with the flow of traffic.”



**You can’t get a ticket when you’re keeping up with the flow of traffic:**

**The truth:** Yes you can. Does keeping up with traffic mean you’re driving above the speed limit? If so, that’s called speeding. There is no such thing as safety in numbers.

**How about: You won’t get a ticket for an emergency**

**The truth:** It’s unfortunate, but you’re still speeding. It’s up to the officer’s discretion as to whether you’ll get a ticket, and that might come down to what kind of emergency you’re talking about. Wife in labor in the back seat: maybe. You just finished that giant soda and you have to pee? Maybe not!

**Myth:** “Wider roads are always safer than narrower roads.”



False, especially in an urban setting. Narrower roads can get drivers to slow down and pay closer attention, especially for pedestrians!

**Myth:** “AWD and 4WD allows me to drive fast in poor road conditions.”



On slippery roads, the technology is excellent for acceleration, yet may lead to driver overconfidence while driving on poor road conditions and result in the driver losing control if traveling too fast for the road conditions. **Overall, the technology does not help a vehicle to steer better or stop in a shorter distance.**

## Myth:

“Red cars receive more citations.”



### **The color of your car affects your chances of getting a ticket**

**The truth:** There's simply no evidence that will lead you to conclude a red car will get pulled over more than a silver car, or vice versa. If there was, you'd definitely be paying extra for insurance for some colors.

Although, when I looked back at some of the crashed car photos in this PowerPoint, there were four red cars! Maybe red car owners are riskier drivers?!

## Myth: “It is illegal to drive barefoot.”



Actually, there is no law against it in Minnesota. (Source: Sgt. Neil Dickenson)

You may not be able to walk into a McDonald's in **bare feet**, but you can **drive** there **without shoes**. **Driving** a car **barefoot** is **legal** in all 50 states. While the risks of **barefoot driving** are debatable, the practice is not **illegal**, though most people assume that it is.

– (online source, May 15, 2013)

May 23, 2012 - Other states like California, however, do allow **motorcyclists to go barefoot**.

“We obviously don't recommend it, but there's no law against it.”  
(California Highway Patrol)

While state laws may not make it *illegal to drive barefoot*, local

lawmakers may enact laws against it.

### **Can you drive in flip flops?**

It's also a myth that wearing **flip-flops** while **driving** is against the law. Police and troopers say that while **you can't** be ticketed for **driving** barefoot or with **flip-flops**, it may hinder your **driving**, making **you** subject to other fines. Being barefoot could cause your foot to slip off the gas or brake pedal, causing you to lose control of the vehicle. It's also not a good idea to wear high heels, sandals or flip-flops while driving. These shoes can fall off and get caught on or wedged beneath the pedals.



## Myth: “It is illegal to ride in the back of a pickup.”



According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety website, whether the transport of passengers in the bed of a pickup truck is allowed or not depends on the state.

The passengers are allowed to ride in the cargo area of a pickup truck without any restrictions in 20 states: AL, AK, AZ, DE, ID, IL, IN, IA, KY, MN, MS, MT, NH, ND, OK, SD, VT, WA, WV, WY.

Other states allow it only under certain circumstances. The ride is limited to non-interstate highways, to passengers' of certain age or to rides of certain length, if its work-related, or if there is no room in the passengers compartment or for farming purposes, during parades and if the speed does not exceed 25 mph.

Why is it dangerous riding in the cargo area of a pickup? The cargo area is designed for transporting cargo. It is not designed

for carrying passengers and it will not protect them if the vehicle is involved in a crash. Furthermore, the passengers can be easily ejected from the back of the truck even at relatively low speeds if the driver is forced to make sudden turns in order to avoid an obstacle. Although it is legal to ride in the cargo space of a truck, that does not mean that it is a good idea to do it.

**Myth:** “It is illegal to have pets loose in your car.”



**You could probably cite for distracted or careless depending on what was happening, but in general, it is not illegal. However having pets loose in your car is not recommended.**

Keeping your pet restrained or crated with in the vehicle will reduce your risk of getting into a crash – by keeping your pet from jumping on you or squeezing in next to the pedals.

Also, it'll keep you and your pets safe if you are involved in a collision.

- If you live in New Jersey, Hawaii or Rhode Island, having an unsecured pet in your vehicle may lead to a fine.
- If you live in Arizona, Maine and Connecticut, you can also be hit with a distracted driving charge if you drive with your pet in their lap.

- Many states have laws banning unrestrained animals in open areas of a vehicle, like the bed of a pickup, or inside of a convertible with its top down.

Add Gordy's other myth...

**Thank you!**

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## **KRISTINE**

- TZD takes a data-driven approach its efforts – meaning that we regularly review the crash data for an area, look for gaps and trends, and then organize our efforts to respond to those trends and gaps.

### SWITCH TO DATA PRESENTATION

- INTRODUCE \_\_\_\_\_, presenting Crash data presentation