

Memorial Day weekend and the summer driving season is just around the corner. With more people hitting the road, safety behind the wheel becomes a top priority. According to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, the 100 days between Memorial Day and Labor Day are often the 100 deadliest days of the year on Minnesota roads. During these 100 days drivers will see increased enforcement activity on our roads. Law enforcement agencies are out doing this work to help curb the preventable behaviors that contribute heavily to traffic crashes. Speeding is preventable. Aggressive and distracted driving is preventable. Impaired driving is preventable. Our mission is to convince drivers to take the steps required to prevent these behaviors. Our sincere hope is that educational efforts will reduce the need for enforcement efforts. However, we are prepared to take action to reduce the likelihood that another family must suffer through life without a mother or father, brother or sister, or son or daughter due to a preventable crash. Here are three ways all of us can make these 100 days safer for everyone.

First on the list is speeding. Bad things happen when people drive too fast. Driving above the posted speed limits makes it much harder to avoid unexpected obstacles and lowers the chances of avoiding a crash. On average, it takes a person  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a second to react after recognizing an obstacle. In that  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a second, your vehicle continues along its path towards the crash. At 35 MPH a vehicle travels 51 feet in that  $\frac{1}{4}$  second and at 55 MPH a vehicle has traveled 80 feet. Traveling at 75 MPH a vehicle has gone 110 feet and at 85 MPH a vehicle has traveled 125 feet in that  $\frac{1}{4}$  second. Excessive speed removes precious space and time needed to avoid a collision and can turn an easily avoidable obstacle into a deadly crash. Do yourself, your passengers, and your wallet a favor by following the posted speed limits.

Next, is aggressive and inattentive driving. The public roadways are not a NASCAR track. There are significant penalties for tailgating, abruptly changing lanes, and disobeying stop lights or stop signs. Beyond the fines you'll pay to resolve tickets for these behaviors, these behaviors also increase the likelihood you'll damage property or hurt others on the road. For instance, accelerating through an intersection to beat a red light may seem harmless. That is until a driver misjudges the timing on the light, arrives in the intersection well after the red, and causes a side-impact crash. The life-altering consequences of that mistake in judgement makes the inconvenience of waiting the 60 to 90 seconds at a stop light seem terribly inconsequential. Distractions are another terribly risky behavior. Removing your attention from the road for 1 to 2 seconds means that your car is traveling without a pilot for hundreds of feet. Focus on the road and drive with courtesy and caution to avoid problems.

Finally, we come to impaired driving. Getting behind the wheel while you are under the influence of alcohol or any other substance is a terrible idea. Consequences of impaired driving range from turning your life upside down with legal fees, court dates, suspended driving privileges, and fines to a life altering crash. Driving at a BAC of just 0.05 doubles your odds of being involved in a crash and driving at a BAC of 0.08 triples your odds of being in a crash. For these coming 100 days, ensure you have a sober driver on every trip.

We are asking drivers to make a 100-day commitment to slow down, pay attention, and drive sober. Let's make these coming 100 days a summer of traffic safety! For more crime prevention information and safety information visit the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at: <https://www.co.benton.mn.us/211/Crime-Prevention>. You can also like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @BentonMNSheriff for regular updates and crime prevention messages.