

Special Report Teen Deaths from Motor Vehicle Crashes

Introduction

During the 2011 state legislative session a bill will be introduced to “establish a Task Force on Teen Driving Safety.”

“The evaluation by the Task Force shall include the following

- 1) Examine data on teen driving by age group and urban/rural setting including but not limited to traffic citations, crashes, injuries, fatalities, and circumstances and causal factors in crashes.
- 2) Review current laws affecting teen drivers.
- 3) Examine data on drivers’ education available for teens, including preparation and ongoing training of instructors, costs for drivers education, current payers, and enrollment statistics.
- 4) Examine barriers to teen driving safety.
- 5) Review national best practices to improve safety of teen drivers.

This Special Report Facts on KIDS in South Dakota will provide compelling statistics about teen deaths due to motor vehicle crashes in South Dakota.

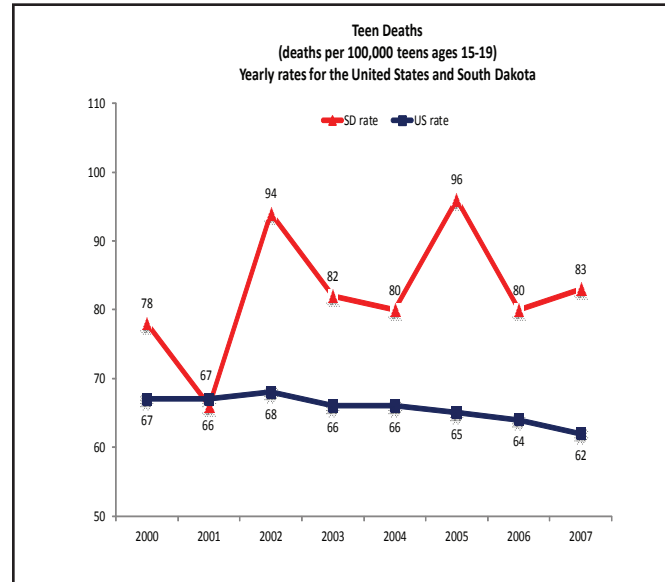
Teen Deaths Nationally & in South Dakota

In South Dakota, the teen death rate (ages 15-19 per 100,000) has been higher than the nation throughout the past decade.

In 2007, the national teen death rate stood at 62 deaths per 100,000 teens (13,299 teens)¹, compared to 83 deaths per 100,000 teens in South Dakota (48 teens)¹. (See graph)

These rates are for teen deaths from accidents, homicides and suicides. The greatest number and percent of teen deaths are the result of accidents.

Note that the term “accidents” has given way to the term “unintentional injury” because “accidents” imply that incidents are inevitable and unavoidable. A high proportion of these incidents are now regarded as being preventable. Unintentional injuries occur in any age group and may occur anywhere, i.e., home, work, school, roads.



A Look at Unintentional Injuries (Accidents)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, data for South Dakota show that the leading cause of death for youth of all races ages 14 to 19 from 2000 through 2007 was unintentional injuries². (See Table below)

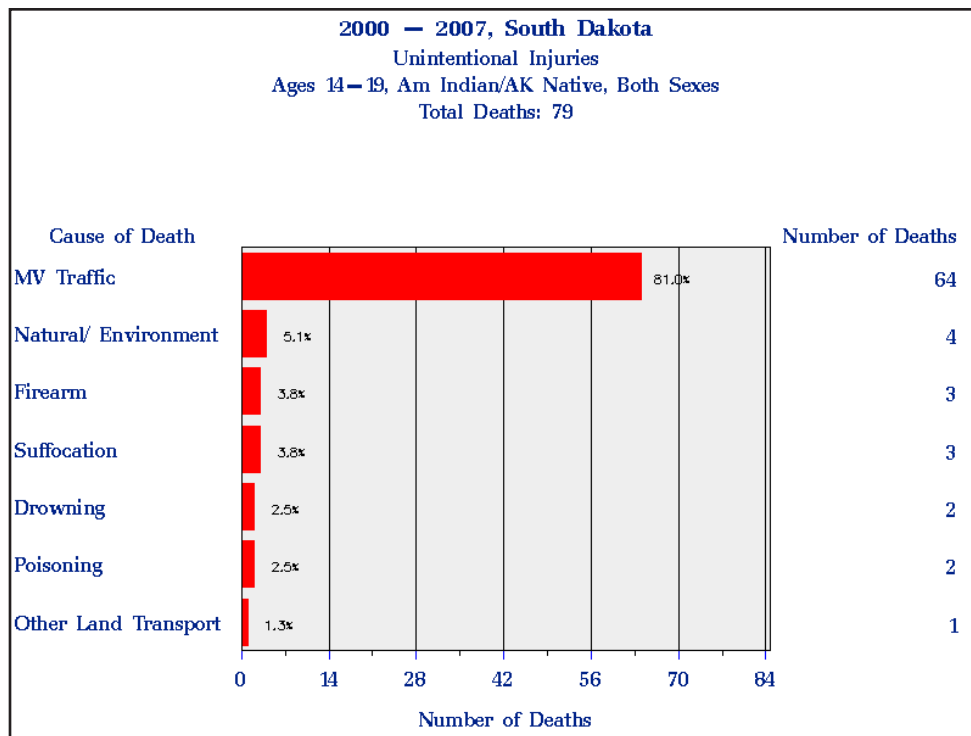
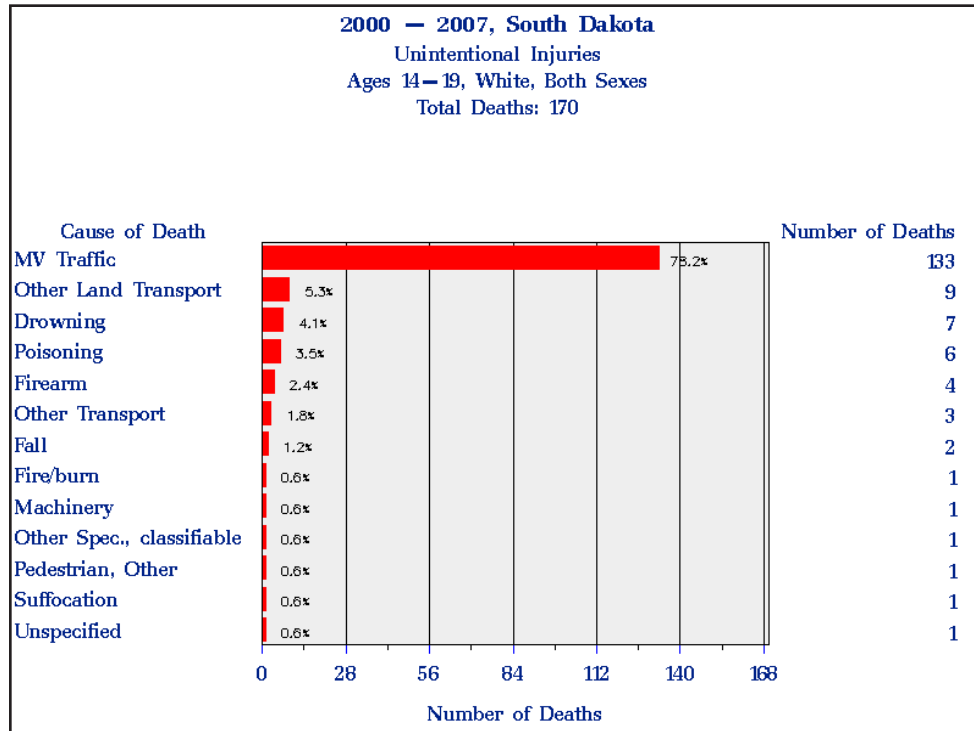
Top 5 Leading Causes of Death, South Dakota 2000 - 2007, All Races, Both Sexes²

Rank	Cause of Death	Deaths
1	Unintentional Injury	252
2	Suicide	109
3	Malignant Neoplasms	19
4	Homicide	14
5	Heart Disease	9

Of the 252 deaths from unintentional injuries for all teens ages 14 to 19, from 2000 - 2007, 79% or 197 were due to motor vehicle traffic.

Leading causes of death for teens by race

A further breakdown by race for ages 14 to 19, shows that unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death, in South Dakota, for White teens ages 14 to 19 (170 total; 78% from motor vehicle traffic) and American Indian/Alaskan Native teens ages 14 to 19 (79 total; 81% from motor vehicle traffic)². (See charts below).



South Dakota Youth Traffic Statistics³

The chart below shows the percent of all licensed drivers ages 14 to 19 in South Dakota for the years 2000 - 2009 and licensed drivers in fatal and injury crashes.

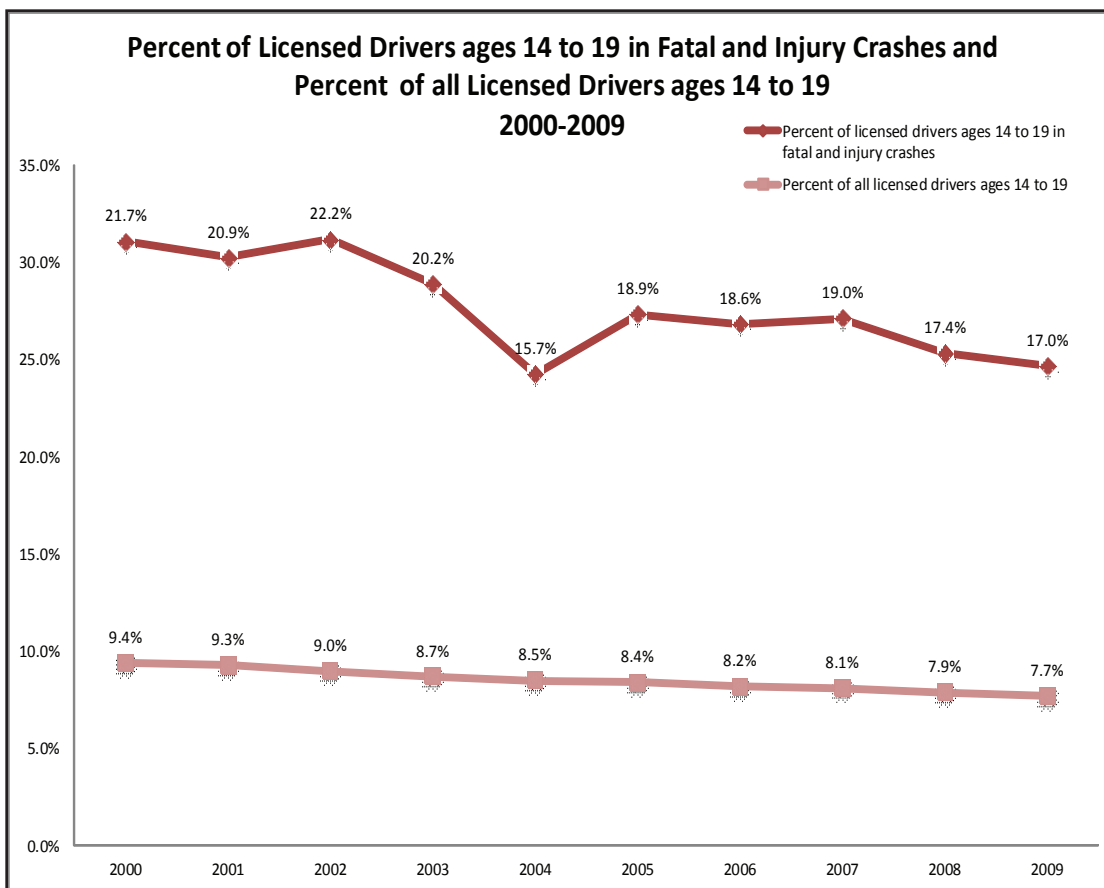
Comparing the age of drivers in fatal and injury crashes with licensed drivers by age shows the younger driver, ages 14 to 19, is over represented as those drivers in fatal and injury crashes.

Over the past ten years, licensed drivers ages 14 to 19 represented about 8.5% of all licensed drivers in the state. This same group have been involved in 14,692 fatal and injury crashes, which represented 19% of all drivers in fatal and injury crashes.

Conclusion

Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of fatalities among South Dakota teens.

A determination of the major factors leading to teen motor vehicle crashes in South Dakota is needed. Are crashes related to speed, alcohol, not using seat belts, limited driving experience, distraction while driving, diverse driving environments, (e.g. rural/urban roads, gravel roads, roads with no shoulders, congested driving areas) or is it a combination of all of these? Reducing South Dakota's teen deaths from motor vehicle crashes will require a closer review of these issues, current laws regarding teen driving, and research on best practices for reducing teen deaths from motor vehicle crashes.





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References

¹The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, www.kidscount.org/datacenter Accessed January 10, 2011.

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Injury Prevention and Control Data and Statistics. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html> Accessed January 26, 2011.

³ Department of Public Safety. Office of Highway Safety/ Accident Records (2000-2009). South Dakota Motor Vehicle Crash Summary. Pierre, SD.

Facts on KIDS in South Dakota is published by South Dakota KIDS COUNT, Beacom School of Business, The University of South Dakota.

The South Dakota KIDS COUNT Project (www.sdkidscount.org) is a national and state-by-state effort, sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, to track the status of children in the United States. By providing policymakers and citizens with benchmarks of child well-being, KIDS COUNT seeks to enrich local, state, and national discussions concerning ways to secure better futures for children and families. Additional funding for the state project comes from the South Dakota Departments of: Education & Human Services.

Thank you to:

- *Valerie A. Johnson*, Social Work Intern with South Dakota KIDS COUNT
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