

# WisDOT: Motorists reminded to watch for deer along roadways

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Over the next couple months, motorists across Wisconsin will need to be especially alert for the potential of deer darting across roadways. Traffic safety officials with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) note that deer/vehicle crashes typically peak during October and November as bucks pursue potential mates.

“The best advice for motorists to protect themselves and avoid hitting a deer is to buckle up, slow down and carefully scan the road ahead,” David Pabst, Director of WisDOT’s Bureau of Transportation Safety said. “Deer can be active any time of day, but especially around dusk and dawn. And if you see one deer cross your path, expect more to follow.”

Last year, Wisconsin law enforcement agencies reported 20,521 crashes between deer and motor vehicles resulting in 641 injuries and nine fatalities (six of the fatalities were motorcyclists). Dane County had the most crashes with 962, followed by Waukesha County with 872 and Manitowoc County with 798. In Kewaunee, Oconto, and Shawano counties, more than half of all reported crashes in 2017 involved deer. A county-by-county breakdown of deer/vehicle crashes in Wisconsin last year is available on the WisDOT website.

If a collision with a deer is unavoidable, traffic safety officials say the safest option is to stay in your lane and brake firmly. “If you swerve suddenly, you can lose control, resulting in a more serious crash with another vehicle or a stationary object like a

tree or utility pole,” Pabst said.

The one exception to the “don’t swerve” recommendation applies to motorcyclists. Motorcycle drivers should slow down, brake firmly and swerve if necessary to avoid hitting the deer. Motorcyclists should still try to stay within their driving lane to avoid hitting other vehicles or objects.

WisDOT offers the following safety tips:

- Slow down, eliminate distractions, and make sure all vehicle occupants are buckled up.
- If you see a deer, reduce speed and blow your horn with one long blast to frighten it away.
- If a collision with a deer is unavoidable:
- Brake firmly. Stay in your lane.
- Avoid sudden swerving which can cause you to lose control of your vehicle and result in a more serious crash.

If you do hit a deer:

- Get your vehicle safely off the road if possible. Turn on the emergency flashers and call law enforcement. Be prepared to describe your specific location.
- Generally, it’s safest to stay buckled-up inside your vehicle. Walking along a highway is always dangerous as you could be struck by another vehicle.
- Don’t attempt to move an injured deer.