

Dept. of Transportation: Safe drivers can reverse reckless driving trend in Wisconsin communities

Posted on Wednesday, Jul 5, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Reckless driving prevention is the Wisconsin State Patrol's [July Law of the Month](#), to encourage all motorists to be aware of the consequences of dangerous driving.

Reckless driving has been a growing problem across the nation and in Wisconsin. Traffic crashes are more dangerous and can be deadly when they involve excessive speeds or other reckless behaviors. About 3,000 people are injured by a reckless driver every year in Wisconsin; 118 people were killed in 2022.

Every driver can make a difference in the effort to curb reckless driving by making responsible decisions behind the wheel. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation continuously works to solve the challenge of reckless driving from all angles – engineering, enforcement and education.

“Reckless driving crashes are preventable. We’re dedicated to working together with community partners and the people of Wisconsin to improve safety on our roads. We need everyone to recognize the risk of irresponsible driving, commit to being respectful on the roads, and help us change the culture of reckless driving,” Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary Craig Thompson said.

Wisconsin’s reckless driving laws

Reckless driving is illegal in Wisconsin. Drivers can face charges for endangering someone’s safety or causing injury to another person on the roads. A reckless driving charge could include negligent behaviors like speeding; improper lane changes; and inattentive, erratic, or aggressive driving. Red light running,

tailgating, illegal passing, and drifting are also reckless driving behaviors.

A new state law enacted in spring aims to curb risky driving behaviors by [increasing penalties](#) for reckless driving convictions. A driver could now face up to \$400 in fines for a first offense. If someone is seriously injured in a reckless driving crash, the driver could face up to six years in prison and \$10,000 in fines.

Partnerships for prevention

The Wisconsin State Patrol works year-round to stop reckless drivers before they cause harm, through daily visibility on highways and special enforcement efforts.

“Wisconsin’s officers play a key role in educating the public on every traffic stop,” State Patrol Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. “Our officers have a vital opportunity to remind drivers that something as simple as increasing your speed can make your vehicle harder to control and increase your risk of injuring yourself or others. We remind all drivers to slow down, avoid distractions and be patient in traffic.”

Speeding continues to be a growing problem in Wisconsin. The number of 100+ mph citations issued by State Patrol rose sharply during the pandemic, from 583 citations in 2019 to 1,403 citations in 2020. State Patrol officers issued 1,159 100+ mph citations in 2022.

Aerial enforcement missions on major traffic routes allow State Patrol pilots to spot drivers who are speeding, tailgating, or driving recklessly. The pilots work with ground-based officers to initiate a traffic stop.

Troopers and inspectors also partner with other local law enforcement agencies for special enforcement campaigns to address issues like reckless driving throughout the year.

Wisconsin agencies are joining law enforcement from 11 states across the region for a Speed Awareness Day enforcement campaign on July 26. The goal is to raise awareness and save lives.

WisDOT’s Bureau of Transportation Safety also partnered with the Milwaukee Bucks and star forward Bobby Portis to launch the [‘Control Your Drive’](#) campaign. This effort, along with other safety campaigns, aims to raise awareness to halt the rising trend of reckless driving.



View the July Law of the Month video and news release
online: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/law/lom.aspx>