



Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario

# Pedestrian Death Review

A Review of All Accidental Pedestrian Deaths in Ontario  
From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2010



***Everyone is a Pedestrian!***

Dear Ontarians,

The Office of the Chief Coroner is pleased to submit this report on the pedestrian deaths that occurred in the Province of Ontario between January 1 and December 31, 2010. This review encompasses the tragic deaths of 95 people who died as pedestrians while travelling the roadways of Ontario in 2010.

The motto of the Office of the Chief Coroner is: ***We speak for the dead to protect the living.***

It is our hope that this report and its recommendations will provide a voice to those pedestrians who lost their lives and that from an examination of their deaths, walking and road safety for pedestrians in Ontario will be enhanced.

The report makes 26 recommendations in the areas of road safety and death prevention.

We encourage all Ontarians to take personal responsibility for their own safety and the safety of all road users.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Bert Lauwers**

Deputy Chief Coroner – Inquests  
Chair, Pedestrian Death Review

*“We speak  
for the dead  
to protect  
the living.”*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### WHO?

- Pedestrian deaths were slightly more prevalent in males (55%) than females (45%).
- Pedestrians over 65 years of age accounted for a strikingly disproportionate share of fatalities based on their representation in the population. They account for about 13.2% of the population, but 36% of the fatalities.
- Children accounted for 3% of the deaths.
- Males were driving the motor vehicle in 67% of the fatalities.
- The peak ages for these male drivers was 25-54 years of age.
- Charges were laid in 30% of the fatalities, both *Criminal Code* and *Highway Traffic Act*.

### WHEN?

- Peak hours for pedestrian collisions were between 2 pm and 10 pm daily, largely coinciding with peaks in traffic volume.
- It was dark or twilight for 57% of fatal pedestrian collisions.
- Pedestrian collisions were generally more frequent Monday to Friday, when traffic volumes are highest.
- January was the peak month for pedestrian collisions leading to fatalities for Ontarians.
- Visibility was clear 95% of the time for fatal pedestrian incidents.
- Road conditions were dry for 81% of the incidents, wet for 14% of the incidents, and snowy for 5% of the incidents.

### WHERE?

- 76% of fatalities occurred in urban areas and 24% in rural areas.
- 75% of pedestrian fatalities occurred on arterial roads, which are wide, signalized streets that carry high volumes of traffic.

### HOW?

Five pedestrian circumstances accounted for 70% of deaths:

1. Pedestrian hit at a mid-block location while crossing (31%).  
*Causes might include motorists not expecting pedestrians to cross at mid-block, reduced visibility when crossing between parked cars, and motorists unable to stop in time.*
2. Pedestrian hit on the sidewalk and/or shoulder of the road (14%).  
*The commonest cause of this may be loss of control of the vehicle.*
3. Vehicle was going straight through the intersection while the pedestrian crossed without the right-of-way (11%).  
*The cause may be motorists with the right-of-way not expecting pedestrians to be in the roadway.*

4. Vehicle turning left while the pedestrian crossed with the right-of-way at the intersection (7%).

*The cause may be that motorists may only be paying attention to oncoming traffic and not looking for pedestrians in the crosswalk.*

5. Vehicle turning right while the pedestrian crossed with the right-of-way at the intersection (7%).

*The cause may be that the driver may forget to look both ways before proceeding.*

In addition to the above five mechanisms, a significant number of pedestrians were struck by a heavy truck (12%) or a public transit vehicle (9%). The cause may be decreased visibility of pedestrians by drivers of trucks, and with pedestrians entering or exiting public transit vehicles.



## WHY?

Several areas which stood out as causal in these deaths:

- **Vehicle Speed:** 67% of the deaths occurred on roads with posted speeds beyond 50 km/hr, and only 5% on roads below 50 km/hr. For the remainder, the posted speed was unknown.
- **Distractions:** Approximately 20% of pedestrians may have had some form of distraction, such as using a cell phone; MP3 player; a mobile device; pushing a shopping cart; walking a dog; or riding a skateboard.
- **Failure to Yield by the Driver:** This was identified as a factor in approximately 21% of all deaths. This occurred when vehicles were turning right (7%), left (7%), going straight through intersections (4%) and at pedestrian crosswalks (3%).
- **Crossing Against the Signal:** Fatalities occurred involving a pedestrian crossing against the signal in 12% of the deaths.
- **Mid-block Crossing:** 31% of pedestrians who were struck were crossing at mid-block locations at uncontrolled crossings where pedestrians must wait for safe gaps in traffic to cross the roadway.
- **Pedestrian Disabilities:** 10% of those involved in pedestrian fatalities were utilizing assistive devices employed by the elderly and the disabled, such as canes, walkers, crutches and wheelchairs.
- **Driver Inattention:** 14% of pedestrians were hit on a sidewalk or shoulder of the road, which may be due to loss of control of the vehicle. Inattention may occur when drivers utilize personal communication devices, computers and music in their vehicles which can lead to loss of control. The use of such communication devices by drivers could not be quantified in our study.
- **Alcohol and/or Drugs in Drivers:** Limited available data suggest that there was evidence of alcohol and/or drug use observed in 7% of drivers.
- **Alcohol and/or Drugs in Pedestrians:** In 28% of the pedestrians, toxicology was positive for drugs, alcohol or both. While 2% of pedestrians struck by a motor vehicle will die, this rises to 48% for intoxicated pedestrians.<sup>13</sup>

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A “**complete streets**” approach should be adopted to guide the development of new communities and the re-development of existing communities in Ontario. Complete streets should be designed to be safe, convenient and comfortable for every user, regardless of transportation mode, physical ability or age.

**The Province of Ontario** should develop a **Walking Strategy for Ontarians** which encourages municipalities to develop policies, practices, and plans for safe and convenient pedestrian conditions for transportation including road safety, recreation and health.

Infrastructure Canada and Infrastructure Ontario should identify funding specific to pedestrian facilities within municipal infrastructure and stimulus funding programs.

The **Walking Strategy for Ontarians** should be led by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and should:

- include representatives with diverse interests in pedestrian safety;
- seek to eliminate all preventable pedestrian fatalities in the Province of Ontario in the long term, and reduce fatalities by 50% by 2022; and
- consider and recognize vulnerable road-using pedestrians such as children, the elderly, and those with disabilities.



“*The Province of Ontario should develop a Walking Strategy for Ontarians.*”

The **Walking Strategy for Ontarians** should become a component of the current revisions to the Provincial Policy Statement 2005 (PPS) which was issued under the authority of the Section 3 of the *Planning Act*, in the section, “transportation planning”.

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO), as a stakeholder in developing the **Walking Strategy for Ontarians**, should solicit feedback from stakeholders on potential opportunities and barriers in policy and legislation such as the *Highway Traffic Act*.

The MTO should amend the *Highway Traffic Act* to allow local municipalities to lower the unsigned default speed limit to 40 kilometres an hour on residential streets from the current limit of 50 kilometres an hour.

The MTO should amend the *Highway Traffic Act* to allow municipalities to erect non-signalized pedestrian crossings in mid-block areas.

Transport Canada should make side-guards mandatory on heavy trucks in Canada.

All municipalities in the Province of Ontario should annually undertake a forensic review of all pedestrian deaths that have occurred within their jurisdictions.

All municipalities in the Province of Ontario should review the collision history of the road before initiating road reconstruction or resurfacing to proactively seek to improve pedestrian safety.

Municipalities, in developing their complete streets approach, should consider;

- the introduction of speed reduction strategies where speed has been implicated in the death(s) of pedestrians;
- reducing speed limits to 30 km/hr on residential streets;
- adopting speed limits of 40 km/hr on other streets, unless otherwise posted;
- installing leading pedestrian signal intervals (LPI) in intersections where there have been excess collisions between vehicles and pedestrians;
- strategies to benefit all pedestrians and prevent harm to senior citizens and those with disabilities;
- strategies to prevent collisions occurring at mid-block uncontrolled crossings by incorporating pedestrian crossing islands for roads with four or more lanes; and
- strategies to prevent collisions occurring where pedestrians are walking along the road.

*“Introduction of speed reduction strategies.”*

The Ministry of Transportation should create an educational body with representatives from both governmental and non-governmental organizations to:

- create an educational program for **senior citizens and other adult pedestrians**; and
- create an educational program for **drivers**.

The Ministry of Transportation, Safety Policy and Education Branch should update the *Official MTO Driver’s Handbook* to include a chapter which clarifies those traffic scenarios in which motorists are most likely to be involved in a collision with a pedestrian.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Transportation should make road safety and pedestrian safety education mandatory for junior kindergarten through grade eight curriculums for children 5 - 14 years of age.

Public education and safety campaigns for both pedestrians and drivers should promote awareness of pedestrian safety during darkness when most fatalities occur, and encourage all pedestrians to wear bright or retro-reflective clothing when walking in the evening or at night.

Police Services in Ontario should develop strong traffic law enforcement programs.