

Don't Veer For Deer

According to Prevention Network News' November/December newsletter, car crashes are a \$130 million a year problem in Michigan. In 2003 there were 67,760 reported car-deer crashes, and more likely a total of 80,000 considering those not reported. Eleven motorist deaths occurred in car-deer crashes in 2003 up from five in 2002.

Because of rapid development in many previously rural areas, and a state deer herd which has grown four times larger since 1970 (ten times larger in southern lower Michigan, which has the 13 counties with highest crash rates), the problem of car-deer crashes will continue.

To avoid these crashes, know the facts, take precautions, and **NEVER SWERVE TO AVOID HITTING A DEER**. Most car-deer crash deaths and injuries occur when drivers swerve to avoid hitting a deer and strike a fixed object or hit another vehicle instead.

Car-deer crashes occur any time of year, in all parts of Michigan, but are more prevalent in spring months when deer graze new grass on roadsides, and most prevalent during the fall which is mating season.

Deer travel in herds, in single file. Where one is seen, others may soon appear. Deer are most active at dawn and at dusk. About 80% of all car-deer crashes occur in two-lane roads between dusk and dawn.

These are tips from the Michigan Deer Crash Coalition

- Be aware, awake, alert and sober when driving.
- Be especially alert in spring and fall, and at dawn and dusk.
- Pay attention to speed limit and deer crossing signs.
- When you see a deer, slow down and expect more of them.
- Don't expect to deter deer by flashing your lights, using high beam or honking.
- If a crash is unavoidable- DON'T SWERVE. Brake firmly, hold onto the steering wheel, stay in your lane, and bring your vehicle to a controlled stop.
- If you hit a deer, pull over, turn on emergency flashers and take safety precautions if you leave your vehicle.
- Don't attempt to remove a deer from the roadway unless you are convinced it is dead. An injured deer is dangerous.
- Report the crash to the nearest law enforcement agency.