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NEW REPORT COMPARES SOCIETAL COSTS OF CRASHES, CRIME

Price tag: Michigan traffic crashes come with hefty price tag

While index crimes resulted in $622 million in monetary costs during 2015, the price tag for traffic crashes exceeded $4.6 billion in monetary costs, according to a new report released by the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute.

The study, funded by the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP), used 2015 traffic crash and index crime data to estimate dollar losses to the state and for each county. Monetary costs include medical care, future earnings, public services and property damage and loss. Non-monetary quality-of-life costs include those associated with pain, suffering and fear.

When further expanded to include monetary and non-monetary quality-of-life costs, index crime costs totaled $2.6 billion in 2015, while traffic crashes resulted in $19.3 billion in total costs, according to the report. For index crime, these values come from jury awards for pain, suffering and lost quality of life due to physical injuries or fear. Index crimes include murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft.

“This report underlines the vital role of traffic safety efforts in our state,” said Michael L. Prince, OHSP director. “Traffic crashes come with a tremendous personal toll and an enormous price tag. Using federal funds for seat belt and drunk driving patrols throughout the year helps save both the lives and the money of our state's residents.”

The five counties with the highest crash costs are Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Kent and Genesee. Keweenaw County had the lowest crash costs.

Alcohol-involved crashes accounted for $800 million in monetary costs and $3.9 billion in total costs. Injury-crash involved unbuckled occupants accounted for $500 million in monetary costs and $2.6 billion in total costs. Crashes involving teen drivers accounted for almost $800 million in monetary costs and $3.2 billion in total costs. Motorcycle-involved crashes accounted for $300 million in monetary costs and $1.8 billion in total costs.

Researchers found that both traffic crashes and crime impose significant economic and social burdens on individuals and society through injury and loss of life, as well as property damage and loss. Efforts to reduce crashes and crime often result in competing demands for scarce public resources. Comparable and up-to-date cost data on crashes and crime contribute to informed decision making about allocation of these resources.

The first crime/crash report was generated in 1988. At that time, Michigan traffic crashes resulted in $2.3 billion in monetary costs and $7.1 billion in total costs. Similar studies were conducted in 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009. The 2015 report, which includes county-by-county information, is available at www.michigan.gov/ohsp.