

DID YOU KNOW???

STOPPED-VEHICLE CRASHES KILL HUNDREDS ANNUALLY

Hundreds of people are killed and thousands are injured each year in crashes involving stopped or disabled vehicles that may not have stood out enough to alert drivers to the danger they pose, according to a new study commissioned by a company that makes enhanced hazard lighting systems.

Using federal crash statistics, transportation data analysis firm Impact Research estimated that 566 people were killed and 14,371 injured each year over 2016-18 in crashes on all types of roads involving a disabled vehicle in which visibility was likely a factor. The annual societal cost of those crashes totaled around \$8.8 billion in medical payments, lost wages, and the less easily quantified costs of death or disability, according to a report in the June edition of “Status Report” by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS).

They found that 95 percent of these inconspicuous-vehicle crashes occur when a vehicle traveling down the roadway collides with a stationary one. However, more than half the deaths and almost 1 in 5 serious injuries occur when a vehicle strikes a pedestrian who is leaving, working on, or returning to a stopped vehicle. On average, this type of crash kills 300 pedestrians a year, a number that has risen by more than a quarter since 2014.

The Malone area experienced such a fatality this past February, when a vehicle struck and killed a woman that was allegedly standing in the road observing damage caused by a previous collision on County Route 8 in the Town of Malone. Another pedestrian was injured in the same incident.

“These crashes illustrate the potential value of stopped-vehicle-ahead warnings, which are already provided by some navigation apps and could be integrated to work with advanced driver assistance features and more advanced driving automation,” says David Zuby, IIHS executive vice president and chief research officer. “They’re also a reminder of why we put so much emphasis on good headlights as a vital crash avoidance technology.” Crashes like these could potentially be eliminated with vehicle-to-vehicle communication, which enables vehicles to wirelessly exchange information about their speed, location, and heading. But long before that technology becomes commonplace, several simpler countermeasures could help, the report suggests.

Earlier research indicates that improving hazard lights so they flash brighter and more frequently and are triggered automatically in the event a vehicle is disabled could reduce crashes. Nearly a third of the collisions in that study involved a stationary vehicle that had its hazards on. Emergency Safety Solutions, which commissioned the Impact Research report, makes one such enhanced hazard lighting system.

Adjustments to the “move over” laws that require drivers to change lanes to give police and emergency services vehicles more room to operate could also help, Impact Research concluded. Such laws are now in place in all 50 U.S. states. But first responders continue to be killed and injured in secondary crashes, prompting the U.S. Government Accountability Office to announce in June 2019 that it would conduct a study to review what might be done to make these laws more effective.