

# NEWS FROM THE ROAD



## In this edition:

- Walk and Bike to School
- Farm Safety
- Distracted Driving
- Construction Updates

## Walking and biking to school is fun, but safety should be priority No. 1

Walking and biking to school is as American as apple pie. That's why for the past several years, students at some McLeod County schools have been participating in the annual Walk and Bike to School Day.

This year, with the global coronavirus pandemic, the Wednesday, Oct. 7 event is known as Walk Anywhere Day. And it's not just about going to and from school.

As before, organizers across the nation are reminding students and their families of the reasons why walking and bicycling to school is a safe preferred choice. But since travel to school may be different for some students this year, the usual trip might be limited to their home, neighborhood or school.

The National Center for Safe Routes to School, the coordinating agency for Walk and Bike to School Day, is committed to empowering communities to make walking and bicycling to school safe and appealing. The organization is reminding families that while physical activity and social connectedness continue to be the day's focuses, pedestrian and bicyclist safety remains Priority No. 1.

The consequences of not walking and biking safely can be life-threatening. According to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, each year in Minnesota, approximately 48 pedestrians and eight bicyclists are killed as a result of collisions with motor vehicles. Statistics collected from 2015 through 2019 show that, of those collisions:

- 69 percent occurred in urban areas;
- 32 percent of pedestrians and 30 percent of bicyclists killed had consumed alcohol; and
- the most common contributing factor attributed to the pedestrian was darting or dashing into the roadway.

The McLeod County Toward Zero Deaths Safe Roads Coalition is reminding motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians that safety is a two-way street. The following are highlights of the state's pedestrian law, courtesy of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety:

- Drivers must stop for crossing pedestrians at marked crosswalks and at all intersections without crosswalks or stop lights.
- Pedestrians must obey traffic signs and signals at all intersections that have them.
- Vehicles stopped for pedestrians can proceed once the pedestrian has completely crossed the lane in front of the stopped vehicle.
- Pedestrians must not enter a crosswalk if a vehicle is approaching and it is impossible for the driver to stop. There is no defined distance that a pedestrian must abide by before entering the crosswalk; use common sense.
- When a vehicle is stopped at an intersection to allow pedestrians to cross the roadway, drivers of other vehicles approaching from the rear must not pass the stopped vehicle.
- Failure to obey the law is a misdemeanor. A second violation within one year is a gross misdemeanor.
- Failure to yield the right-of-way and driver inattention/distraction are the main contributing factors in pedestrian crashes.

#### **Safety tips for drivers**

- Scan the road and sidewalks ahead for pedestrians.  
Drive attentively and at safe speeds.

**Remember, pedestrians can be difficult to see, especially in bad weather or at night.**

- Anticipate pedestrians especially in urban areas, around schools and colleges.
- Before making a turn, look in all directions for pedestrians.
- Look carefully behind your vehicle before backing up, especially for small children.
- Watch for people in wheelchairs and motorized carts, who may be below eye level.
- Stop for crossing pedestrians at every intersection, even those without crosswalks or stoplights. Stop far enough back so drivers in other lanes can also see the pedestrian in time to stop.
- Do not block crosswalks while stopped, and don't pass other vehicles stopped for pedestrians.



#### **Safety tips for pedestrians**

- Cross streets at marked crosswalks or intersections; don't cross mid-block and obey traffic signals.
- Make eye contact with drivers and ensure they see you and will stop.
- Clearly show your intentions to cross.
- Watch for turning and passing vehicles.
- Look across all lanes for moving vehicles before proceeding.
- Continue to be alert and watch for vehicles when walking in a crosswalk — drivers aren't always looking for pedestrians.
- Use sidewalks where provided — where no sidewalks are provided, it is usually safer to walk facing traffic.
- Make it easy for drivers to see you — dress in light colors and wear retro-reflective material. Carry a flashlight when it's dark. Alcohol and drugs can impair your ability to walk safely, just like they do a person's ability to drive.
- Use extra caution when crossing multiple-lane, higher-speed streets.





## **Bicycle Safety**

Bicyclists and motorists are equally responsible for bicycle safety. The No. 1 factor contributing to bicycle-vehicle collisions is failure to yield the right-of-way — by bicyclists and drivers alike. About half of all bicycle-vehicle collisions are due to a variety of bicyclist behaviors, such as disregarding a traffic sign or signal. The other half are caused by vehicle driver behaviors, such as inattention and distraction.

### **Rules of the road and safety tips:**

- Bicyclists may ride on all Minnesota roads, except where restricted.
- Bicyclists should ride on the road, and must ride in the same direction as traffic.
- Motorists must at all times maintain a three-foot clearance when passing a bicyclist.
- Bicyclists must obey all traffic control signs and signals, just as motorists.
- Bicyclists must signal their turns and should ride in a predictable manner.
- Bicyclists must use a headlight and rear reflectors when it's dark. To increase visibility, add a rear flashing light.
- Drivers must drive at safe speeds and be attentive — look for bicyclists, check blind spots.
- Drivers should use caution and look twice for riders when turning.
- Drivers should use caution when opening door upon parking on side of road.



## **WALKING AND BIKING RESOURCES**

- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)
- [Walk and Bike to School](#)
- [Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Public Safety](#)

# CAUTION, PATIENCE URGED AS FALL BRINGS FARM EQUIPMENT ONTO COUNTY'S ROADS

With the fall harvest season underway at more than 900 McLeod County farms, equipment is being moved from one field to the next. Those in the business of agriculture – as well as motorists – are reminded to be vigilant about safe driving practices on the road.

The McLeod County Toward Zero Deaths Safe Roads Coalition reminds everyone that farm equipment is large and heavy, making it hard for operators to accelerate, slow down or stop. The equipment also makes wide turns and can sometimes cross over the center line. These vehicles can also create large blind spots, making it difficult for operators to see approaching vehicles. All of these factors can cause serious crashes.

From 2016 to 2018, there were seven fatalities and 385 crashes involving at least one farm vehicle in Minnesota, according to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's crash data. Of the seven fatalities, one was a farm vehicle rider. Of the 154 injuries, 50 were farm vehicle riders.

The Department of Public Safety and other highway safety experts remind motorists to:

- Slow down and use caution when approaching farm equipment. Don't assume the operator can see you.
- Wait for a safe place to pass. Only pass a slow-moving vehicle after you can see that the roadway is clear of oncoming traffic far enough ahead to safely complete the pass.
- Watch for debris dropped by tractors and trucks. It is safer to brake or drive through debris than to veer into oncoming cars or off the road.
- Be sure to use your seat belt. Motorists' safety equipment usage tends to be lower among the 18 counties that make up southwest Minnesota. Only far northwest Minnesota has lower usage.

Those who operate farm equipment on public roads are urged to heed the following:

- Be sure all machine operators are licensed for the equipment they are using. Be sure they know and obey the laws when driving farm machinery on public roads. They should yield at intersections, stop at stop signs and wear seat belts.
- Inspect your equipment before taking it out. Verify that all lights and flashers on your vehicle are working properly. Check brakes, fluids, tires, steering and signals to make sure everything is working properly.
- Does your equipment have a portable fire extinguisher? Know where it is and be sure it's properly rated, UL listed and regularly inspected.
- Check your towed equipment. All loads should be balanced and securely mounted. Be sure to secure it by using safety chains and tow bars.
- Know the height of your equipment. Avoid power lines, low bridges and other overhead obstacles.
- Avoid busy roads during high-traffic times.
- Avoid traveling before dawn and after dusk. If you need to drive at these times, make sure your headlights and flashers can be seen.
- Communicate with fellow motorists.
- Use turn signals and hand signals whenever possible.
- Watch out for passing vehicles when making left turns, especially into fields. Install wide mirrors so you can see traffic that's following you.

## LEARN MORE FROM THE:

National Center for  
Rural Road Safety





# October is Distracted Driving Month

Did you know...more than 2,800 people in the U.S. died in distraction related crashes in 2018 alone? That's at least seven people every day.

That same year, 276,000 people were injured in distraction-related crashes.

Drivers should be aware of three major types of distraction: visual (eyes), manual (hands) and cognitive (mind). Most people recognize when they are visually and/or manually distracted and seek to disengage from those activities as quickly as possible. People typically do not realize when they are cognitively distracted, such as when using a cell phone. When your eyes, hands and mind are not focused on driving, you increase the chance that you will make mistakes that can result in injuries or even death.

**Are you a multi-tasker when you drive?  
Take the quiz today!**

[QUIZ LINK](#)

**SO YOU THINK YOU CAN MULTITASK?**

Your brain can't process two things at once. It switches attention from one task to another.

Did I remember to feed the dog?

96% of people think texting while driving is dangerous – yet 44% do it.

Dangerous even when sitting at red lights or stop signs because it takes your brain some time to return its focus to the road.

Voice-to-text is not safer – it may distract you longer than texting.

No! Cancel!

Send text to Aunt Lisa

Sending text to Amoré Pizza

**Nothing is more important than getting to your destination safely. Use your phone and other technology only when you are safely parked.**

**JustDrive**

[nsc.org/justdrive](https://nsc.org/justdrive)

**nsc**  
National Safety Council

Sources: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, NSC report "Understanding Driver Distraction"

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## "It Was Just..."

It was just a quick call  
It was just a short trip  
It was just one drink  
It was just a picture  
It was just an email  
It was just a glance  
It was just a text  
It was just a bite  
**"Just" is all it takes**



GET YOUR FREE MATERIALS AT:  
[nsc.org/justdrive](https://nsc.org/justdrive)

Distracted driving is an epidemic.  
Be part of the solution.



## DISTRACTED DRIVING RESOURCES

- [National Safety Council](#)
- [Minnesota Dept. of Public Safety](#)
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)
- [Centers for Disease Prevention and Control](#)



Need help with your car seat?  
McLeod County Public Health can help!  
Call for a car seat appointment at 320-864-3185



**SEATBELTS**  
*Save Lives*

## McLeod County Road Work Updates



The Hwy 15/Main St. Hutchinson project is close to the finish line! Crews continue to install traffic signals and lighting, as well as sod in the boulevards between 3rd and 5th Ave. S. Learn more [here](#).



Southwest Minnesota has been awarded \$4.18 million from the Highway Safety Improvement Program, a federal-aid funding program designed to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

The projects receiving funding include:

- Multiple LED STOP signs throughout the district A reduced conflict intersection at U.S. Hwy 212 and Chandler Ave. in Glencoe
- A roundabout at US Hwy 212 and Morningside Dr. in Glencoe
- A roundabout at Hwy 7 and McLeod CR 1 south of Winsted/north of Lester Prairie
- Left-turn bypass lanes on US Hwy 59 in Slayton

Learn more [here](#).

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