



Submitted photo/Oregon State Police

Oregon State Police and other agencies investigate a fatal crash Aug. 15 on U.S. Highway 97 north of Terrebonne.

Highway 97

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"As COVID hit, we saw a very sharp decrease in traffic on the highway, but we also saw an increase in the speeds on the highway," Ratliff said. "We see faster drivers more commonly now."

About one-third of fatal crashes on state highways involve a criminal element such as drunken driving, Ratliff said. OSP is currently investigating three criminal fatal crashes in Central Oregon.

In addition to driving under the influence, OSP troopers have seen more aggressive driving during the pandemic that has led to fatal crashes.

"People are frustrated and that plays out," Ratliff said. "It's easy to tell when someone is

frustrated because that comes out in their driving."

The majority of the fatal crashes along Highway 97 last year were between Bend and Redmond and south of La Pine, areas where traffic has increased steadily in recent years.

In the nearly 10 years Ratliff has worked in the Bend area, travel between Bend and Redmond has matched interstate traffic in Springfield and La Grande, where Ratliff previously worked.

"Even though it is a smaller city, the traffic volumes that we get at times can be comparable to some of those larger areas I've worked as well," Ratliff said.

OSP troopers are directed to enforce the "Fatal 5" factors in fatal crashes: speed, occu-

pant safety (seatbelt use), lane safety, impaired driving and distracted driving.

"As patrol troopers, that's what we really try to focus our priorities on," Ratliff said.

In an attempt to prevent fatal crashes, ODOT has completed several safety improvement projects through the Highway 97 corridor and has a few more planned in the coming years.

Mark Barrett, ODOT traffic manager for the region, said recent projects include installing rumble strips and warning signs in specific areas. Future projects will install barriers between Bend and Redmond and south of Sunriver to help prevent head-on crashes.

"Those are all proven highway safety countermeasures," Barrett said. "They are successful at reducing crashes."

ODOT also focuses on education campaigns to caution drivers.

Vanessa Robinson, ODOT traffic safety coordinator, creates programs to educate the public about safe driving practices to avoid serious crashes. Robinson oversees statewide campaigns that include social media posts and commercials for TV and radio.

At a local level, Robinson partners with organizations to share safe driving messages to each community in the state.

"We keep having serious and fatal crashes," Robinson said. "I want to get into as many communities as possible."

Robinson has seen how the educational programs have made a difference. For example, certain programs have gained national attention for reducing crashes involving teenage drivers and motorcyclists.

"People's risk taking behaviors don't just go away on their own," Robinson said. "But that doesn't mean they aren't open to messaging that could change their mind about a specific behavior."

ODOT relies on the engineering projects and educational campaigns to prevent fatal crashes, but ultimately most crashes are due to drivers' behaviors, Davey said.

That is a fact state troopers and transportation officials can't change.

"There still is this element of people making their own decisions," Davey said. "We really are just trying to combat those possible poor decisions with these things as much as we can."

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Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin file

Kaitlyn Carter, an echo tech, leads a chant during a strike March 4 at St. Charles in Bend.

St. Charles

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The walkout began March 4 and was the first work stoppage in more than four decades at St. Charles Bend.

More than 100 workers could be seen each day since the strike on a picket line outside the hospital near Neff Road and Medical Center Drive.

Nurses told reporters outside the hospital last week that their jobs had become more difficult since the medical technicians left the building. St. Charles said it limited surgical procedures at the beginning of the strike and moved some cases to St. Charles Redmond.

This is the first contract that the union has attempted to negotiate on behalf of the members with St. Charles, since it began representing the members in October 2019.

Over the past year, both

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sides met 29 times to resolve the labor dispute with medical technicians.

The hospital tried to stop the strike by filing lawsuits in state and federal courts. A federal judge ruled the court could not halt the strike.

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U.S. traffic deaths spike in 2020

Pandemic lockdowns lead to open roads and reckless driving

BY TOM KRISHER

Associated Press

DETROIT — Pandemic lockdowns and stay-at-home orders kept many drivers off U.S. roads and highways last year. But those who did venture out found open lanes that only invited reckless driving, leading to a sharp increase in traffic-crash deaths across the country.

The non-profit National Safety Council estimates in a report issued earlier this month that 42,060 people died in vehicle crashes in 2020, an 8% increase over 2019 and the first jump in four years.

Plus, the fatality rate per 100 million miles driven spiked 24%, the largest annual percentage increase since the council began collecting data in 1923.

And even though traffic is now getting close to pre-coronavirus levels, the bad behavior on the roads is continuing, authorities say.

"It's kind of terrifying what we're seeing on our roads," said Michael Hanson, director of the Minnesota Public Safety Department's Office of Traffic Safety. "We're seeing a huge increase in the amount of risk-taking behavior."

Last year's deaths were the most since 2007 when 43,945

people were killed in vehicle crashes. In addition, the safety council estimates that 4.8 million people were injured in crashes last year.

Federal data shows that Americans drove 13% fewer miles last year, or roughly 2.8 trillion miles, said Ken Kolosh, the safety council's manager of statistics. Yet the number of deaths rose at an alarming rate, he said.

"The pandemic appears to be taking our eyes off the ball when it comes to traffic safety," Kolosh said.

Of the reckless behaviors, early data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration show speed to be the top factor, Kolosh said. Also, tests of trauma center patients involved in traffic crashes show increased use of alcohol, marijuana and opioids, he said.

In Minnesota, traffic volumes fell 60% when stay-home orders were issued early in the pandemic last spring.

Hanson said state officials expected a corresponding drop in crashes and deaths, but while crashes declined, deaths increased.

"Almost immediately, the fatality rate started to go up, and go up significantly," Hanson said, adding that his counterparts in other states saw similar increases. "It created less congestion and a lot more lane space for drivers to use, and quite honestly, to abuse out there."

"It's kind of terrifying what we're seeing on our roads. We're seeing a huge increase in the amount of risk-taking behavior."

— Michael Hanson, director of the Minnesota Public Safety Department's Office of Traffic Safety

In late March and early April, the number of speed-related fatalities more than doubled over the same period in 2019 in the state, Hanson said. Last year, Minnesota recorded 395 traffic deaths, up nearly 9% from 364 in 2019.

Drivers also used the empty roads to drive extreme speeds. In 2019, the Minnesota State Patrol's 600 troopers handed out tickets to just over 500 drivers for going over 100 mph. That number rose to

1,068 in 2020, Hanson said.

Traveling over 100 mph makes crashes far more severe, the safety council said.

The high number of speeding drivers is continuing even as traffic is starting to return to pre-pandemic levels, according to Hanson.

The safety council is calling for equitable enforcement of traffic laws, infrastructure improvements, mandatory ignition switch locks for convicted drunken drivers, reducing speed limits to match roadway designs, and laws banning cellphone use while driving, among other recommendations to stem the deaths.

The council collects fatal crash data from states on public and private roads. The numbers released on Thursday are preliminary, but every year are only slightly different from the final numbers, Kolosh said.

OBITUARY

Frances Lorraine Brown

November 16, 1925 - March 7, 2021



Frances Lorraine Brown was born in Portland, Oregon, on November 16, 1925, to Morris and Elsie (Klein) Wilmarth, the fifth of six children. Her parents, grandparents and early ancestors were hardy pioneers. Frances graduated from Benjamin

Franklin High School in Portland, serving as both speaker and soloist. She attended Portland State University, New York University, City College of New York, and several community colleges. She studied voice at the Conservatory of Music in Portland and privately in New York City.

Her passions were classical music, languages and learning. Later she discovered the joy of oil painting. She was an executive and legal secretary for many years and was involved in Continuing Education all of her life. She attended and served at the Tumalo Community Church for many years in multiple capacities and was involved in the Auxiliary of Gideon's International for 20 years locally and as the state Vice President.

She passed away peacefully in her sleep at home March 7, 2021 and will be missed by her many family members and friends, all whom she loved dearly. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

OBITUARY

Philip John Swee

December 30, 1961 - February 1, 2021

On February 1, 2021, Philip John Swee, of Redmond, passed away at the age of 59. Phil was born December 30, 1961 in Tyler, Minnesota. Phil married Susan Riddell and they had one daughter, Noelle Christine. For the last 10+ years, Phil was the owner/operator of Terrebonne Electric, which later changed its name to Redmond Electric. Phil was preceded in death by his father, Raymond, his mother, Bernadine, a brother David and a sister Cheryl. He is survived by his daughter Noelle Christine, his brother Robert and his sister Noelle Brigid, in addition to a number of nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews. A Celebration of Life is being planned for June 26, 2021. Details will be made available at a later date.

OBITUARY

Sharron Lea Allman

November 30, 1931-February 21, 2021

Sharron Lea Quinn Allman was born in a small ranch house just outside of Big Piney, Wyoming to Fredrick Francis Quinn and Naomi Celestial Ray Quinn. She was a sister to older brother Larry Quinn and three younger brothers, Jim, Joe, and Charles (CF) Quinn would soon join the family.

The family lived in various areas in Wyoming and eventually moved to Culver Oregon in 1946 and then on to the family home of 160 acres on Little Agency Plains outside of Madras. Sharron was not afraid of a hard day's work and on the farm she enjoyed being outside helping her father and brothers. She attended school in Culver and Madras and graduated in May 1947 from Madras Union Hi. She worked several years for Dr. Evan Thomas before settling into 30 plus years with Jefferson County School district in the administrative office. After retirement Tom and Sharron spent many years wintering in Arizona and spending summers in Powell Butte before permanently locating there in 2009.

Sharron is survived by loving husband of 70 years, Tom Allman and three daughters and sons-in-law whom she felt where like her own sons: Debey and Dave Clark of Colton, OR; Diane and Bob Ringering of Madras; Darlene Allman and Mark Willard of Powell Butte; Brothers Jim Quinn of Portland, Joe Quinn of Terrebonne, Sister in law Nicky Nicholes of Beaverton and Brother and Sister in Law Bob and LaVeta Allman of Madras. Grandchildren, Ty Snow (Nikki) of Mesa, AZ; Tessa Ryan (Micheal Freeman) of Eagle Creek, OR; Jocelyn Byrne, Santa Fe, NM; Brian Ringering of Madras; Eric Ringering (fiancée, Sandra Stovall) and 12 great grandkids: Kaylee, Lily, David, Oliver, Ben, McKenna, Diego, Prestyn, Daxtyn and three Bonus Girls, Miranda, Jessica, & Sara and many nieces and nephews.

Her passing was the result of complications of a fall in November and not covid related.

She is preceded by the passing of her parents and brothers Larry and CF who were each taken 15 years apart by drunk drivers. Also preceded by sisters in law Gracie Quinn, Wanda Quinn, Rea Quinn Hanson, Karen Quinn, and Rachel Allman Lopeman.

Over the past year, Tom and Sharron have resided at Brookside Place in Redmond and the family would like to thank the staff for the loving care provided them especially in this past year of isolation.

We three girls thank our Mom and Dad for the most perfect childhood and upbringing we could have ever had. You created a home full of love and support and taught us life skills and values with the Golden Rule being the most important one. Thank you both for building that happy yellow house on the hill. Night, Night Mom.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to Mothers Against Drunk Drivers Oregon, PO Box 596, Springfield, OR 97477.