

State shows great improvements in transportation safety results

The preliminary numbers from 2010 are in, and they paint a picture of Oregonians responding to transportation safety messages. Oregon's motor vehicle fatality toll for last year is preliminarily set at 325. That's 13 percent lower than 2009 (377 fatalities) and the lowest since 1944, when it was 245.

"Of course, this is good news overall," said Troy E. Costales, Oregon Department of Transportation Safety Division administrator. "It appears that education and enforcement are helping Oregonians realize they can make a difference in safety. Still, there were too many individuals who paid the price of their lives, and we all must continue to be diligent."

Improvements in road design and traffic management techniques have also contributed to fewer crashes and fatalities, as has the availability and skill of emergency responders. But most important is the personal responsibility required by drivers, riders and walkers every time they travel.

Although 2010's numbers won't be finalized until later this year, other preliminary statistics show a positive trend:

- The number of "zero fatal" days (days when there are no fatal crashes) grew to 167 last year. The number of "zero fatal" days has been increasing the past few years.

- The number of motorcycle fatalities was the lowest since 2004, at 38. Also, it appears 19 percent of the motorcyclists in fatal crashes were under the influence of alcohol or drugs, one of the lowest percentages in many years.

- The number of bicyclist fatalities has remained low, at seven.

- Based on the number of vehicle miles traveled, estimates show a fatality rate of 0.96 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled — the lowest in Oregon motorized history, surpassing the goals set in 1995 and 2004 by ODOT and the transportation safety community.

The numbers for pedestrian safety are not as positive, according to preliminary statistics.

- Pedestrian fatalities were higher than expected, at 62 (In 2009, 39 were killed).

- In the first six months of 2010, more than half of the pedestrians killed were under the influence (16 of 31 tested positive for alcohol/drugs), with seven above 0.11 BAC (blood alcohol content).

- In the first six months of 2010, almost two-thirds of the pedestrians killed were not at an intersection (marked or unmarked) and instead were reported as "in the roadway" (23 of 31).

If these numbers hold, Costales said, this will be the 12th straight year Oregon has fared better than the national overall crash fatality average, after 50 years of being worse than the national average.

"The 2010 story clearly shows that by buckling up, driving and walking sober, managing speed and training our teen drivers, we are absolutely making a difference," said Costales. "I want to stress, though, that we can all do even more, because one life lost is one too many."

Here are some general tips for staying safe on Oregon roads:

- Don't drive impaired. Alcohol, illegal drugs and even some legal drugs can reduce the ability to use good judgment.

- Obey the speed limit. Speed limits help reduce crashes based on congestion, road design and other factors.

- Buckle up every time. Safety belts and child safety seats (including boosters) are the biggest contributors to saving lives in crashes.

- Pedestrians: Stay alert, walk predictably, follow traffic signals, wear light-colored or reflective clothing, and be especially careful at curbs.

- Bicyclists: Ride with traffic, follow traffic signals, wear helmets, wear light-colored or reflective clothing, and maintain control of your bicycle.

- Young drivers: Take a formal driver education course.

- Pay attention: Your life depends on it.

To learn more about Oregon's transportation safety efforts or to get involved, visit www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS.

Can You Dig It?

By Schann Nelson
Columbia County Master Gardener



Hello gentle readers! Many thanks to our esteemed extension agent Chip Bubl for picking up the slack when I couldn't write. It feels weird trying to write now, after such a long hiatus, especially since the season feels so much the same now as it

did in November. It's a matter of long gloomy days, with brief moments of sunshine to run out and soak it up.

I have a Nikko Blue hydrangea that I would sure like to have bloom some day. In past years, it has succumbed to our false spring by starting to grow, then dying clear back to the ground later in the spring. Then, delayed by the clouds and damp, it doesn't seem to get enough growth to put blossoms on before the weather gets too cold again. Three other white hydrangeas, purchased as tiny dormant roots from Park Seeds, have bloomed steadily since their third year in the ground. All were planted after this (my second) Nikko Blue plant, which I purchased in a one-gallon pot.

This year, when I saw that these warm days were causing it to begin to grow, I covered the 2-foot round shrub with frost blanket, added a couple of one-gallon jugs of water to help retain heat at night, and tucked the edges in all around. I really don't know if this is going to help the early growth survive. But I'm attempting to follow Chip's recommendation about this problem in answer to my query at last year's market.

The garden is now as dormant as it's going to get — the trick is to be able to get out and do what needs to be done when it's not frozen and, pos-

sibly, dry enough. Circumstances do not allow me to linger longer, spouting prose but, when (if) you get a chance, it's time to:

- Transplant and divide.
- Kill moss and grass, respectively, where you don't want them.
- Prune fruit trees and cane berries.
- Clean up and compost dead stuff.
- Clean and sharpen tools, and get annual maintenance done on power equipment.

So much to do, and I'm sure you can make your own list. I wish you luck and godspeed with all your winter chores.



— Pruning Workshop —

The Columbia County Master Gardeners™ will hold a pruning workshop February 26, from 10:00 a.m. to noon, at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. Topics covered will include pruning fruit trees, small fruits including grapes, roses, and other woody plants. There will be a brief discussion about fruit tree diseases and insects.

The event is free and open to the public. Dress for the weather and bring pruning tools if so inclined.

Church Directory

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

Carl Pense, Pastor
850 Madison Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-1103
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
Children's Sunday School

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Larry Gibson, Pastor
2nd Ave. and Nehalem St., Vernonia
503 429-8301
Morning Worship, 11:00 a.m.
Sabbath School 9:30 a.m.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Wayne and Maureen Marr
662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,
503 429-0373
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator
960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-8841
Mass Sunday 12:00 Noon
Religious Educ. Sunday 10:30 a.m.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor John D. Murray
359 "A" Street, Vernonia
503 860-3860
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

957 State Avenue, Vernonia
503 429-6790
Sunday Worship 9:45 a.m.
Children's Church (Blast!) 10:15 a.m.
Nursery 10:15 a.m.
High School Youth 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Prayer 6:00 p.m.
Vernonia Community Preschool

VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sam Hough, Minister
410 North Street, Vernonia
503 429-6522
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m.
(meets in Youth & Family Center)
Home Group Meeting throughout
the week at various locations

PIONEER BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

John Cahill, Pastor
939 Bridge Street, Vernonia
503-429-1161
www.pbfallive.com
Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Thursday Prayer 7:00 p.m.

NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH

Gary Taylor, Pastor
Grant & North Streets, Vernonia
503 429-5378
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
Nursery available
Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

Marc Farmer, Branch President
1350 E. Knott Street, Vernonia
503 429-7151
Sacrament Meeting, Sunday 10 a.m.
Sunday School & Primary 11:20 a.m.
Relief Society, Priesthood and
Young Women, Sunday 12:10 p.m.