

Roadway Departure – a Focus Area of the Delaware SHSP

Roadway departure crashes in Delaware rival those related to impaired driving, which we discussed a bit back in November. Indeed, between 2015 and 2019, roadway departure was a factor in 28% of fatalities and 16% of serious injuries, right behind impaired driving. The Delaware Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) was updated for 2021-2025 and the data-driven plan selects eight Emphasis Areas on which to focus for the planning period. In this article, we will have a brief look at the Roadway Departure Emphasis Area, but we encourage you to have a look at the SHSP itself and consult the additional resources on DeIDOT’s support [page](#) as well.

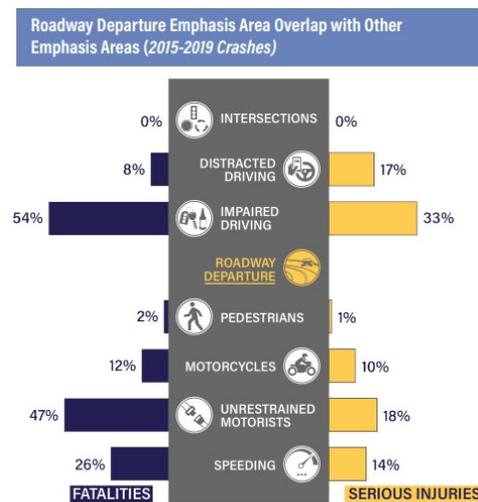
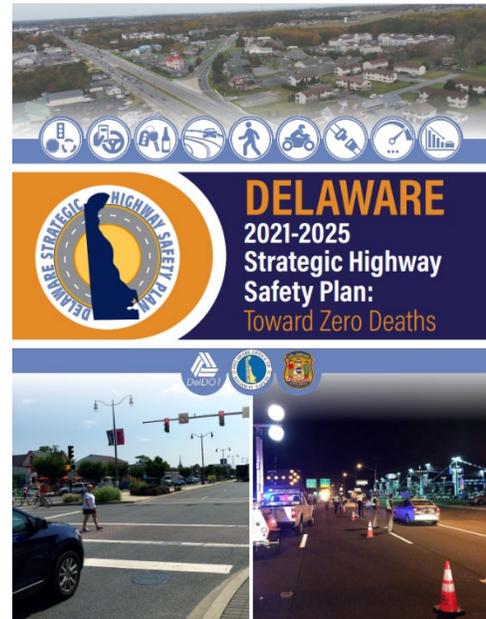
By roadway departure, we mean anytime the vehicle unintentionally leaves the travel lane, whether it crosses the centerline or the edge line of the lane, and strikes something (trees and other fixed objects, another vehicle, a pedestrian, a bicyclist), overturns, flips, or otherwise continues out of control.

This is another emphasis area that relies heavily on the “4Es” – Engineering, Education, Emergency Response, and Enforcement. Our best efforts at engineering and maintenance can serve to make the roadway safer for all users, but the hearts and minds of roadway users need to change if we are to genuinely pursue a Toward Zero Deaths goal.

In 2019, there were 112 serious injury and fatal crashes in Delaware related to roadway departure, trending downward in recent years. In the 2015-2019 planning period, nearly 28% of fatalities and serious injuries involved roadway departure. As with other Emphasis Areas, there is crossover of factors, and roadway departure crashes often coincide with impaired driving, while unrestrained motorists are another common factor.

Roadway departure victims are strongly biased towards males (70%), although age does not discriminate here as much as with other emphasis areas; with the exception of the truly old and truly young, being a victim of roadway departure is an equal opportunity event.

So, what is the plan for 2021-2025? The SHSP calls for five strategy areas. Strategy 1 is to implement engineering countermeasures, such as high friction surface treatments, rumble strips, and enhanced pavement markings. Strategy 2 aims to minimize the consequences of roadway departure through median guardrail, better clear zone management, and collaboration with utility companies on historically problematic equipment. Strategy will enhance public



information messaging to increase safe driving habits. Strategy 4 will develop and/or review several policy and guideline areas to promote practices that will reduce roadway departures. Strategy 5 will improve roadway departure data collection to help identify high risk corridors.

Each of these strategy areas include specific action items that the 4E's will collaborate on over the five-year period with the objective of reducing roadway departure fatalities and serious injuries by 15%. To learn more about the specific strategies, have a closer look at the [plan](#).

Reducing serious injuries and fatalities on Delaware roadways will take a continued, long-term diligence on the part of all stakeholders, including roadway users. Engineering, maintenance, enforcement, education, and emergency response are key to the long-term objective of Toward Zero Deaths, but roadway users (drivers, motorcycle riders, pedestrians, cyclists, skateboarders, and segwayers) must join the fight and be less impaired, less distracted, more restrained, and slow down.

