

# Montana FICMMR

## Fetal, Infant, Child, and Maternal Mortality Review

NOVEMBER, 2013

### CHILDHOOD MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS, MONTANA, 2006-2011

The Montana Fetal, Infant, Child, and Maternal Mortality Review (FICMMR) statute requires local jurisdictions to review all deaths of Montana-resident infants and children under the age of 18 years, fetal deaths from 20 weeks gestation through birth, and maternal deaths up to one year postpartum.<sup>1</sup> The goal of FICMMR is to determine whether deaths were preventable and make recommendations to prevent future deaths. This report addresses statewide findings about childhood motor vehicle deaths in Montana from 2006 through 2011.

From January 2006 through December 2011, 129 infants, children, and teens were killed by motor vehicles. Most decedents were passengers or drivers although two were riding bicycles hit by motor vehicles and 19 were pedestrians (Figure 1).

Fifty-eight deaths occurred in vehicles driven by unlicensed children or teens under the age of 16 years.

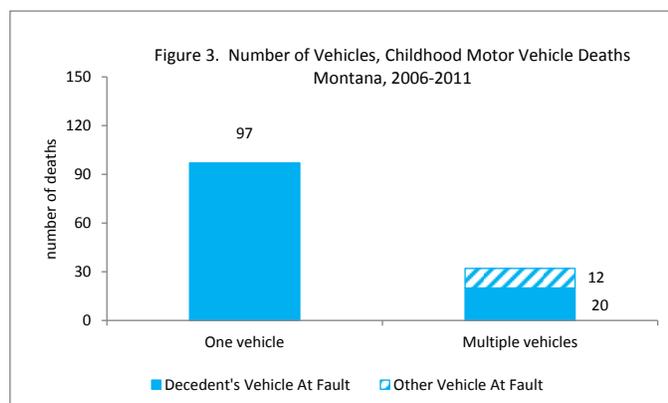
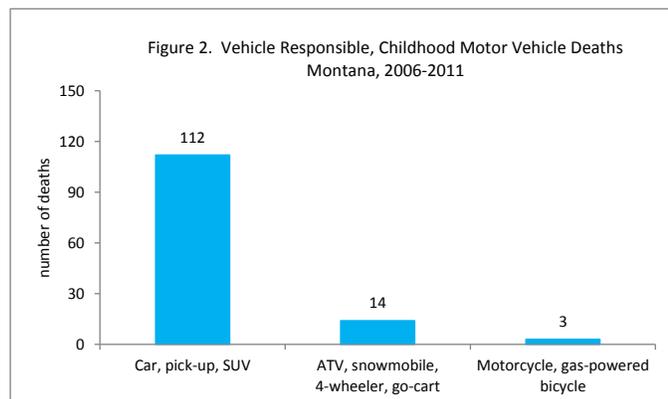
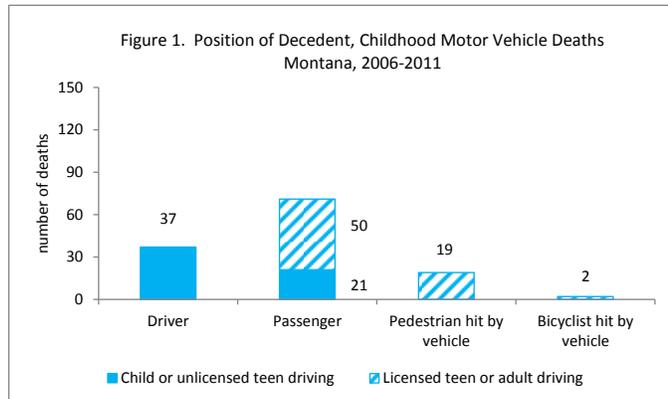
Eight pedestrian deaths were caused by drivers running over or backing over unseen toddlers; six occurred to older children or teens walking on the shoulder of roads or highways and one teen was backed over in a parking lot. Four of the teen pedestrians killed were impaired by alcohol or other drugs at the time of their deaths.

The great majority of deaths involved on-road vehicles although 14 deaths were caused by off-road recreational vehicles, two by motorcycles, and one by a gas-powered, motorized bicycle (Figure 2).

Twelve of the 17 children who died on motorcycles or recreational vehicles were under 16 years of age and operating the vehicles without licenses. One child was a passenger on an off-road vehicle operated by another child.

Most fatal crashes involved only one vehicle (Figure 3). Very few were caused by the driver of another vehicle in a multiple-vehicle event.

More than a quarter of deaths were attributed *primarily* to speed or reckless driving and one fifth to drivers being impaired by alcohol, other drugs, or both (Figure 4). One fifth of drivers of cars, pick-ups, or SUVs operated on-road were underage



<sup>1</sup> Montana Code Annotated 50-19-401 through 50-19-406, <http://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/50/19/50-19-401.htm>

and unlicensed, or were driving with suspended licenses. Only 11 fatalities were attributed to weather, 10 specifically to icy roads. More than one cause may have been involved in any particular event.

Most fatal crashes, especially those involving excessive speed, occurred on rural roads or highways (Figure 5). Fatalities in cities or towns included backing over toddlers in driveways or on sidewalks, pedestrians struck by vehicles, and bicyclists being hit by cars at intersections.

One in six infants, children, or teens who died was known not to be restrained by a seat belt or age-appropriate child or infant seat, or was known not to be wearing a helmet (Figure 6). The true fraction who were unrestrained or not wearing helmets might be higher because data were missing for 19% of decedents.

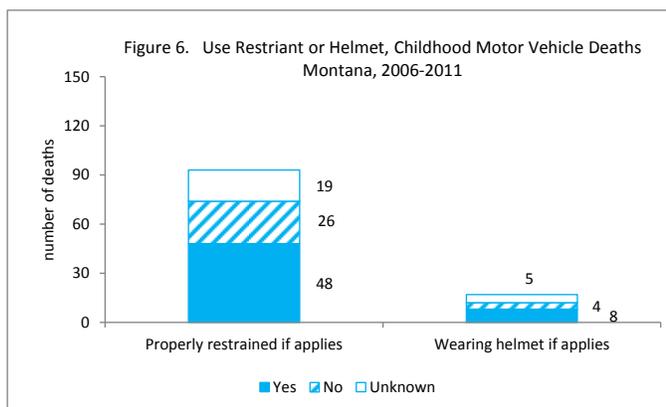
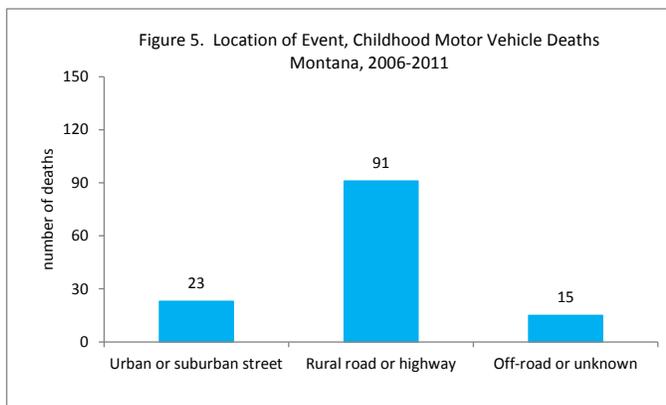
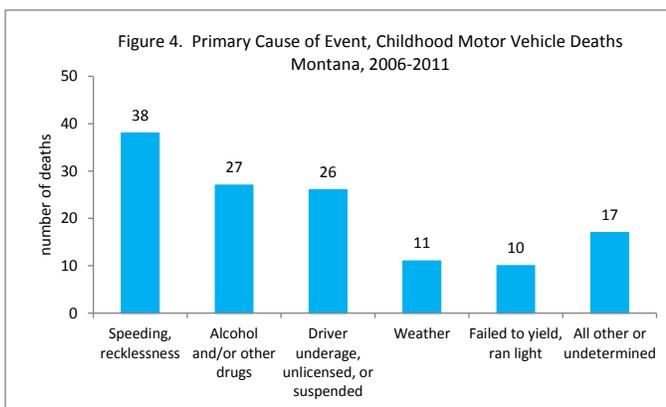
### Summary and Recommendations

Most childhood motor vehicle fatalities were single-vehicle events involving on-road vehicles on rural roads and highways. Many were made lethal by speed, reckless driving, alcohol and drugs, underage or unlicensed drivers, and lack of age-appropriate restraints or helmets.

- Observance and enforcement of existing laws and statutes – speed limits, DUI, graduated licensing, seat belt use, and age-appropriate restraints – might have prevented many of these deaths.<sup>2,3</sup>
- Montana law states that children under 18 years of age operating motorized recreational vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles, 4-wheelers, go-carts) must wear protective head gear.<sup>4</sup>

Children are permitted to operate recreational vehicles off-road in Montana, but they should be supervised by adults.

- Toddlers are unaware of the hazards of vehicles and may be nearly invisible to drivers in many situations. Driveways as well as streets can be dangerous. Young children must be supervised and drivers need to be alert to the presence of small children.



### Resources for Prevention of Childhood Motor Vehicle Deaths

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/index.html>
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov>
- Children's Safety Network, <http://www.childrenssafetynetwork.org>
- Safe States, <http://www.safestates.org>
- Montana Buckle Up, <http://www.buckleup.mt.gov>

<sup>2</sup> Montana Code Annotated 61-6-132, <http://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/61/5/61-5-132.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Montana Code Annotated 61-9-420, <http://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/61/9/61-9-420.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Montana Code Annotated 61-9-417, <http://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/61/9/61-9-417.htm>

For information about FICMMR program, call 406-444-3394 or visit <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdrp/index.shtml>

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