May 26, 2010

News Release

For Immediate Release

April Crash Report Card

The Springfield Public Works Department’s April 2010 Crash Report Card shows there have been six fatality crashes from January 1 through April 30 of this year compared to three in the same time period in 2009. The number of total crashes has decreased by 0.5 percent while the number of injury crashes has increased 10 percent, respectively, compared to the same period last year.

May Safety Message

In past times, the majority of those people using our roadways were doing so via automobiles and trucks. Today, the trend shows an increase in alternative modes of transportation on our city streets. Street designs are being adapted, and are often referred to as “complete streets.” This new design approach strives to accommodate all users of the street system, including bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as those who get around with wheelchairs, or with strollers. Those modes of “alternative transportation” have been growing noticeably over the past few years for several reasons: for health reasons, environmental concerns, leisure activity, and as a response to increased gasoline prices in our present economic situation. While the City of Springfield is making an effort to accommodate the increased need in our community to make the roadways more multi-modal-friendly, motorists themselves need to develop the habit of looking for those who are a lot more vulnerable. The local crash data clearly shows the need to address pedestrian, bicycle and motorcycle crashes in our community:

In 2009, there were 82 traffic crashes in Springfield involving motorcycle drivers, causing injuries to most of the riders. As of April 30, 2010, there have been 20 reported motorcycle crashes and there were 21 pedestrian crashes, of which 18 sustained injuries. Also, through April 30, 2010, nine bicyclists have been hit by motor vehicles, of which eight sustained injuries.

The numbers of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcycles on our roadways are increasing, which is an overall positive development for our community. Unfortunately, many motorists do not yet realize that they must also adapt to having these alternative forms of transportation on our roadways. It’s a good idea to develop new safe practices, such as:

Motorists:

- Before making a right-hand turn, always check your right mirror and blind spot for bicycles approaching on your right and check the cross streets for pedestrians and bikes that may be entering the street.
- Before making a left turn, check for on-coming motorcycles and bikes going straight and check the street for pedestrians walking in the crosswalk to your left before you turn. At crosswalks, you must yield to pedestrians.
- When driving near on-street parking, always be extra alert for pedestrians and especially children that may step out between parked cars. Also, watch for car doors being opened into traffic.
- After parking your vehicle, turn your head and check the street for bicyclists that may be approaching from the rear before you open your car door. Checking the car mirrors is not enough.
Pedestrians:

- Always use traffic signals and intersection crosswalks to cross the street. If there’s a pushbutton at a traffic signal, you must push the button to receive a WALK signal to obtain the maximum time to cross.
- The crosswalk or the pedestrian signal does not assure your safety. It is your responsibility to look out for cars and bicycles that may or may not stop for you. Especially at intersections, be aware of traffic turning across your path while you walk across the street.

Bicyclists:

- Always wear a well-fitted helmet and bright, light colored clothing. Also make sure your brakes work and that the bicycle is adequately sized for you.
- Always assume you’re not being seen and never assume the right-of-way. Be especially alert for vehicles turning in front of you at intersections.
- It is important to obey the same traffic rules as motorized vehicles. Position yourself on the roadway such that motorists on the street know you are there and what you are trying to do in traffic.
- Watch parked cars for the possibility that a motorist might open their door or pull out of the parking place or driveways into your traveling path.

Scooter & Motorcycle Drivers:

- Always assume other motorists do not see you and drive accordingly. Keep your eyes moving to stay aware of changing traffic conditions and be on the defense for errant motorists.
- Make yourself visible: Wear brightly colored clothing with reflective gear. Make sure your headlights are on at all times.
- Vehicles turning left in front of oncoming motorcycles are the number one killer of motorcyclists nationally. Slow down and assume you have not been seen by the other driver. Keep a safe distance behind all vehicles, especially trucks and semis. Make a point to always “head check” before maneuvering.
- Never drive after consuming alcohol or other drugs. Last year, out of the nine fatal motorcycle crashes, only two crashes did NOT involve alcohol or drugs.
- Helmets put a few inches between your head and the pavement when in a crash. Wearing DOT-approved helmets is strongly recommended. Stay away from using “skull caps” and other non-DOT-approved helmets.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Mandy Taylor, Public Works Traffic Engineering at (417) 864-1801.

Further driving tips are also provided by the Springfield Police Department: [http://mo-springfield.civicplus.com/347/Traffic-Safety-Tips](http://mo-springfield.civicplus.com/347/Traffic-Safety-Tips)