July Crash Report Card

The Springfield Public Works Department’s July 2010 Crash Report Card shows there have been eight fatal crashes (resulting in 10 total fatalities) from January 1 through July 31 of this year compared to five fatal crashes (resulting in five fatalities) in the same time period in 2009. The number of injury crashes has increased by 2 percent, while the number of total crashes has decreased 2 percent, respectively, compared to the same period last year.

Safety Message

Summer is slowly coming to an end, giving way to the typical fall weather. Sunny days are mixed with downpours, strong winds, thunder and hail storms that can be hazardous, especially when driving.

During strong rainfalls, drivers must turn on their headlights and slow down. Drivers may also want to use the inside lane, if applicable. It is also important to not blindly follow the vehicle in front of you as they may choose to drive through deeper waters that should be avoided for personal safety.

Flooding can occur within a few minutes of strong rainfalls, and flash floods statistically claim the most deaths among severe weather events. Even though floods aren’t uncommon in the Ozarks, many motorists underestimate the force and danger of rushing water and end up damaging their vehicles and put their lives in harm’s way as they attempt to cross flooded areas. Indeed, it doesn’t take much water to cause the catalytic converter to crack, short out the electrical system, or damage the engine through the air intake. More importantly, attempts to move stalled vehicles have caused many deaths.

Built-up communities such as Springfield are more prone to “urban flooding” because the runoff can be up to six times greater than in rural areas where there’s less concrete and more open, pervious area to absorb and disperse stormwater. In urban environments, a heavy downpour can turn streets into riverbeds, and overflowing stormwater channels are especially hazardous as they often rush across low-lying street segments with high speeds, sweeping vehicles sideways off the road with ease.

- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling. It also only takes about half a foot of fast-moving water to sweep adults off their feet.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles and easily displace 1500 lbs.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles and pick-up trucks.
- The best defense against flooding is preparedness. Check for weather alerts, keep your vehicle’s tires properly inflated and in good condition. Avoid hazardous weather when possible. Those who live close to flood-prone areas may want to park their vehicles at higher elevations.

If flooding is occurring, do not drive unless it is absolutely necessary. Make sure your lights are on and slow down, because — especially in the dark — pavement is hard to discern from standing water. Never attempt to drive through water if you are unsure about the depth. If
your vehicle becomes surrounded by water or the engine stalls, abandon your vehicle against the current if possible, and find higher ground.