

Preliminary OPP data suggests poor behaviour on and off roads in 2016

A first glance at last year's Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) traffic data signals a troubling increase in number of on-road, off-road, marine and pedestrian deaths compared with the previous year.

While all of the numbers are preliminary, OPP is reporting 276 fatal motor vehicle collisions (MVCs) on OPP-patrolled roads in 2016 where 309 people were killed. By comparison, there were 262 fatal MVCs in 2015, killing 301 people.

Early data suggests that driver inattention, speed, alcohol and/or drugs, and lack of occupant restraint (known as the 'Big Four') were again causal factors in a high percentage of the overall road deaths last year. Close to 75 per cent of the 309 MVC deaths were attributed to these road user behaviours. In comparison, the Big Four were factors in 77 per cent of the 2015 overall collision fatalities.

Off-road vehicle (ORV) deaths spiked significantly, with 23 deaths investigated by OPP last year, compared to 14 in 2015.

A total of 16 people died in snowmobile incidents in 2016, up from 13 in this off-road category the year before.

Pedestrian fatalities in OPP jurisdiction increased significantly in 2016, with 38, compared to 25 in 2015.

Marine-related fatalities were up in 2016 as 21 people were killed in motorized and non-motorized boating incidents, compared to 18 the previous year.

While the OPP's 2016 traffic data is subject to further compilation and analysis, the organization can already draw an important conclusion from what it has seen.

'The OPP is truly saddened that Ontarians appear to have steered fatality numbers in the entirely wrong direction in virtually all traffic-related categories last year,' OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair commented. 'This is a wake-up call to drivers, passengers and pedestrians to adopt much safer behaviours in 2017 - a critical factor in reducing the number of preventable deaths on and off our roads.'