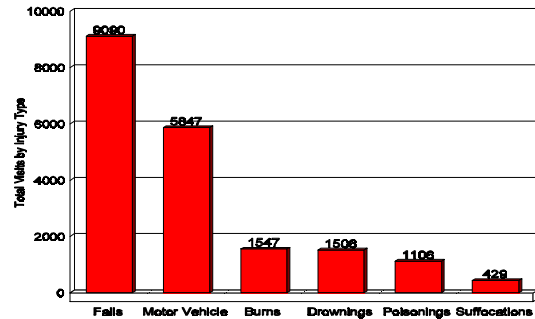




# City of Manchester Department of Health UNINTENTIONAL INJURY REPORT CARD



## Hospital Emergency Room Visits Due to Unintentional Injuries for Manchester Residents by Injury Type, 1997-2001



HEALTHY PEOPLE 2010 OBJECTIVE (Developmental):  
Reduce nonfatal unintentional injuries.

Every year, the number of Manchester's residents who experience unintentional injuries requiring a hospital ER visit, could fill the Gill Stadium. Within only three years, that number would fill the Verizon Wireless Arena. There were nearly 20,000 Manchester residents with unintentional injuries requiring a hospital ER visit between 1997 and 2001. During this timeframe, there were 28 deaths and 9,090 hospital ER visits due to falls alone. Fifty percent of fall-related deaths occurred in persons age 65 or older. In the same 5-yr period, 25 deaths, 5,847 hospital ER visits and 1,271 hospital admissions were due solely to motor vehicle crashes. Residents below the age 25 account for 41% of all motor vehicle-related hospital ER visits, and residents 65 years and older account for 61% of all motor vehicle-related hospital admissions.<sup>2</sup> The burden of unintentional injuries disproportionately affects the young and the elderly.

In the United States, deaths from unintentional injuries for persons 1 to 34 years of age are higher than any other cause of death. Drownings, falls, fires, suffocations, motor-vehicle crashes, poisonings and firearms are common causes of unintentional injuries and fatalities.<sup>1</sup> Many people believe these injuries are "accidents" and happen arbitrarily. In reality, they are not only systematic and predictable but they are preventable.<sup>1,3</sup> The three "E's" of injury prevention (engineering, education and enforcement) can be implemented to mitigate injuries or prevent them before they occur. Examples of engineering include childproof medicine bottles, seatbelts and bicycle lanes. Education is effective and safe behaviors learned at a young age are more likely to carry into adulthood.<sup>4</sup> Enforcement of policies and laws are essential. Studies have shown that both enhanced enforcement campaigns and community-wide education improved child safety seat use, seat-belt use, bicycle-helmet use and reduced alcohol-impaired driving.<sup>5,6</sup>

### Teen Motor-Vehicle Risk Behaviors in 2001<sup>7</sup>

|   | Manchester | New Hampshire | United States |
|---|------------|---------------|---------------|
| % of high school students who never or rarely wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else.   | 15.9%      | 13.3%         | 14.1%         |
| % of high school students who, in the past 30 days, rode one or more times in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. | 25.9%      | 27.5%         | 30.8%         |
| % of high school students who, in the past 30 days, drove a car or other vehicle one or more times when they had been drinking alcohol.               | 12.1%      | 9.7%          | 13.3%         |

**WHO PAYS?** Although the greatest impact from unintentional injuries is in human suffering and loss of life, the financial cost is staggering. Costs associated with unintentional injuries include medical expenses, administrative expenses, property damage and employer expenses.<sup>8</sup> In 2003, the cost of both fatal and nonfatal unintentional injuries cost Americans approximately \$586.3 billion.<sup>9</sup> In 2000, the total cost of motor vehicle crashes alone was \$230.6 billion.<sup>10</sup> It is estimated that Americans save \$32 for every dollar spent on a child safety seat, \$30 for every dollar spent on a bicycle helmet and \$69 for every dollar spent on a smoke alarm.<sup>11</sup>

### WHAT WORKS? RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY:

- Strictly Enforce Blood Alcohol Concentration Laws.** Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes accounted for 41% of all traffic-related deaths in the United States in 2002.<sup>12</sup> Evidence suggests that sobriety checkpoints by law enforcement are effective in decreasing alcohol-impaired driving.<sup>5,13</sup>
- Enforce Graduated Driving License Privileges for Youths.** Graduated driver licensing laws reduce the risk of a motor vehicle crash among teen drivers. These laws are successful in that they improve a teen's driving skills under low risk conditions and reduce the amount of time an inexperienced teen spends driving.<sup>14</sup>
- Support and Advocate for Stronger Traffic Safety Laws and Enforcement for All NH residents.** It is estimated that child safety seats are up to 70% effective and safety belts are up to 60% effective in preventing deaths in infants, children and adults. Yet, 3 out of 10 Americans do not routinely use safety belts. New Hampshire is the only state without a law requiring all motor vehicle occupants to use a safety belt, even though they increase observed safety belt use and decrease fatal injuries.<sup>5,13</sup> Motorcycle helmets have also been found to prevent 37% of fatalities related to motorcycle crashes.<sup>15</sup>
- Advocate for Safer Communities.** Communities should be bicycle and pedestrian friendly, allowing for children and adults to have safe walking and cycling routes to school and work.<sup>9</sup> Bicycle helmets reduce the risk of traumatic brain injury by 88%, yet only a quarter of American children wear bicycle helmets. Multifaceted bicycle safety education programs are effective in increasing bicycle helmet use.<sup>6</sup>
- Implement Multifaceted Programs** to reduce injuries due to falls among the elderly. While 35-40% of older adults fall each year in the United States, falls can be prevented through environmental change, exercise and other behavior changes.<sup>16</sup>

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL:

- Be Proactive.** Take action to avoid injuries before they occur. Assess your home environment for potential fall hazards. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home and outside of sleeping areas. Install fire extinguishers in the kitchen, garage and workshop and learn how to use them. If you have a swimming pool, build an enclosure around it to keep young children from wandering near and falling in.
- Be Smart.** Follow posted speed limits and traffic safety laws. Avoid driving a motor vehicle, motorcycle, recreation watercraft or snowmobile while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Instead, use a designated driver. Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or motorcycle.<sup>6, 15</sup> Wear a seatbelt and ensure children are in an age, weight and height appropriate child safety seat or booster seat located in the back seat of a vehicle.<sup>5,13</sup> Wear a life vest when on open bodies of water or rivers.
- Be Vigilant.** Be aware of when the batteries in smoke detectors need changing and check prescriptions regularly to guard against unintentional overdose. Keep household cleaners, pharmaceuticals and firearms out of reach of children. Learn CPR and first aid techniques to provide aid in the event of an injury.<sup>9</sup>



### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO DECREASE UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES IN THE MANCHESTER COMMUNITY, PLEASE CONTACT:

- ✓ Manchester Health Department (603) 624-6466
- ✓ Injury Prevention Center and NH SAFE KIDS, Dartmouth Medical School (603) 653-1135