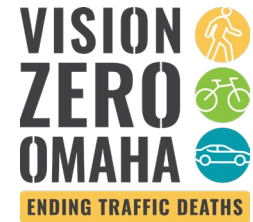


OMAHA VISION ZERO MEDIA GUIDE



Omaha is embracing Vision Zero, a global initiative that rejects the belief that deaths and serious injuries on our roads are an acceptable cost of transportation mobility. The vision is zero deaths and zero serious injuries on our roads. Traffic crashes can be prevented. Mayor Jean Stothert made the commitment for Omaha to implement Vision Zero following the [recommendations of the Omaha Vision Zero Task Force](#).

"Vision Zero is a comprehensive and holistic approach to safer streets that enhances the quality of life for ALL of us in Omaha. The work of Vision Zero requires collaboration and leadership to improve safe mobility and access through a Safe System Approach." – Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert

THE CHALLENGES ON OMAHA STREETS

- From 2011 to 2020 on Omaha streets (excluding freeways) there were:
 - 261 people killed
 - 4,456 people injured
 - \$4.1 billion in economic cost to society
 - **Nearly five people are seriously injured every week** in traffic crashes on average.
 - **Someone dies every 10 days** in traffic crashes on average.
- The City of Omaha has set up a [crash dashboard](#) showing the traffic fatalities in Omaha.

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF VISION ZERO

- **Vision Zero is a different approach to traffic safety.** The goal is eliminating *all fatal and serious injury* traffic crashes, not preventing every fender bender.
- **Serious traffic crashes are not random events.** Instead, crashes occur in patterns strongly tied to roadway configurations and the location of the road in the city.
- **Fatal and serious injury crashes result from systemic conditions.** It is not enough to identify a simple “cause” of a crash, especially when attributed to a specific user behavior. These “causes” often miss the full picture and are not productive to eliminating severe crashes.
- **Vision Zero shows the way to creating a safe roadway system.** It is important that our community plan, design, fund, maintain and use roads that are part of a safe roadway system that is forgiving and leads to fewer deaths and serious injuries. Omaha is working together to do this.
- **Vision Zero is a long-term commitment.** The transportation infrastructure currently in place in Omaha was developed over the past 75 years. Past decisions take time and funding to address.
- **Everyone deserves safe, accessible streets and sidewalks.** Everyone.
- **A Vision Zero Action Plan is being developed** by Omaha to outline solutions to the issues. More information can be found on the City’s [OmahaVisionZero.com website](#).
- **While serious injuries and fatalities on U.S. Interstates in Nebraska are not in the purview of the Omaha Vision Zero efforts,** the commitment by community leaders and residents to a



different approach to traffic safety also may benefit users of the state's highway system indirectly.

NEWS REPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Words used in conversation and news stories shared by the news media to describe traffic crashes are important. Words communicate ideas, and these ideas influence how readers, listeners and viewers think about what has happened and what should be done about it. Below are respectful recommendations for members of the news media who are reporting on traffic crashes. These references help advance the work of the City and the Omaha Vision Zero efforts.

- **Use the term “crash” instead of “accident.”** The word “accident” implies the crash is inevitable and not a fixable problem. Using the word “accident” increases the perception that the outcome was unpreventable. Traffic crashes can be prevented. Vision Zero offers answers and solutions.
- **Serious crashes are not random events or “freak accidents.”** Serious crashes may appear to be random because they are relatively rare. However, specific crash patterns and risk factors that contribute to serious crashes exist in Omaha. When a crash occurs, it is an opportunity to highlight what risk factors may contribute to the crash, such as whether the crash occurred on an identified “High Injury Network” street with a history of serious crashes. City of Omaha staff can help identify these factors and provide additional data and background.
- **Assigning a simple cause to a crash does not tell the full story.** Instead of assigning a simple cause to a crash, there is the opportunity to ask deeper questions such as, “What could have prevented the crash?” Other examples of questions are, “If a street had been designed with traffic-calming features and a slower speed limit, would the driver have been speeding?” “If there was a safe pedestrian crossing, would the pedestrian have been crossing the road in an unsafe location?” “Are there strong, well-funded community mental health programs in Omaha to help someone address their mental health challenges and end their alcoholism so they do not drive their car intoxicated?”
- **Report with neighborly compassion about the people involved in a crash.** Small mistakes that normally would cause no harm in other activities can lead to fatal outcomes in traffic crashes. There are cases of truly negligent behavior on Omaha streets, but many deaths and serious injuries result from honest mistakes that occur in a system that isn't designed to be forgiving.
- **Assigning singular blame to a crash victim is always inappropriate.** This is especially the case when pedestrians and cyclists are injured or killed. Sometimes the behavior of a pedestrian or cyclist may have contributed to the crash occurring, but for a pedestrian or cyclists to be hit, a driver is always involved. Statements like “the pedestrian was wearing dark clothing” do not portray the true or full situation, nor does it help the audience to understand the root of the issue.
- **Understand the effects of survivorship bias.** If there are two witnesses to a traffic crash, and one is killed, the person who died cannot speak on their own behalf. Taking one party's word at face value and reporting it as fact is not a typical practice in any area of news reporting.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND FURTHER RESOURCES

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City of Omaha Vision Zero Website:
<https://www.OmahaVisionZero.com/>

Additional Media Information:
<https://visionzeronetwork.org/for-reporters/>