

2008 Fatality Summary

The City of Portland has some good news. Beginning in the mid-1980's, total traffic fatalities in the city began to trend downward. 2008 was the best year yet. In 2008, there were a total of 20 traffic fatalities in the city – 15 motor vehicle occupants, 5 pedestrians, and 0 bicyclists. This is the lowest number of total traffic fatalities of any year on record, dating to 1925. The highest number of traffic fatalities was 89 in 1934. The second highest was 84 traffic fatalities in 1972.

Some highlights from the data include:

- The lowest number of fatalities for motor vehicle occupants on record
- The lowest number of pedestrian fatalities on record – the highest was 52 pedestrian fatalities in 1934 and 1936
- The fifth year in the past decade with zero bicycle fatalities in the City of Portland

Many people immediately ask “Why are there fewer traffic fatalities?” That question is excellent fodder for academic research. However, it likely has to do with a variety of factors related to crash prevention and crash survivability.

Portland has strived to have a comprehensive traffic safety program that focuses on engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement, and evaluation. Some specific factors that likely contribute to the improved safety include (but are certainly not limited to) traffic calming, automated enforcement, pedestrian and bicycle safety initiatives, neighborhood involvement, numerous traffic safety education efforts, seatbelts, and airbags.

Portland remains vigilant about improving traffic safety and neighborhood livability. Efforts will continue that will focus on making the roads as safe, intuitive, and comfortable for all roadway travelers. It seems that as the streets become safer for the most vulnerable, they become safer for everybody. So, as it becomes safer for a child to walk to school, a senior to ride a bike to a park, or a person with disabilities to independently travel, it appears to also become safer to drive.

