



Watch out for deer in Southeast Michigan

There were 6,196 vehicle-deer crashes in Southeast Michigan in 2004 (down from 6,641 in 2003 and up from 6,094 in 2002), according to figures released by SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, based on crash data received from the Michigan Department of State Police,

Criminal Justice Information Center. That figure represents 3.8 percent of all crashes in 2004 (164,900 total).

The greatest number of deer crashes occur most frequently during October, November, and December; most occur on two-lane roads between dusk and dawn. In 2004, there were three fatalities involving deer in the state.

Deer crashes are more prevalent now for a couple of reasons — rapid development in previously rural areas and a statewide herd four times larger than in 1970 and 10 times larger in Southeast Michigan. Oakland County had the most vehicle-deer crashes (1,551) in the seven-county Southeast Michigan region. Rochester Hills had the most vehicle-deer crashes — 154 in 2004 — in Southeast Michigan. Other communities in the "top 10" are Scio Township (150 crashes); Oakland Township (132); Brighton Township (119); Marion Township (109); Independence Township (106); Handy Township (103); Washington Township (102); Howell Township (101); and Genoa Township (97).

As a member of the Michigan Deer Crash Coalition (MDCC), SEMCOG is working to decrease vehicle-deer crashes. This year, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources estimates the deer herd to be 1.75 million. Deer crashes are costly. In Michigan, deer crashes cost at least \$125 million per year; the average insurance claim is about \$2,000 in damage, usually to the front end, often leaving the vehicle undriveable. The coalition cautions drivers not to swerve out of a lane to avoid a deer. It's generally safer to hit the deer than run off the road and risk injuring another motorist.

Want more information? Visit the MDCC Web site, accessible from SEMCOG's Web site — www.semco.org.

SEMCOG is a regional planning partnership of local governmental units serving 4.9 million people in the seven-county region of Southeast Michigan striving to enhance the region's quality of life. The Village of Dexter is a member of SEMCOG.