

More than 20 dead in traffic accidents before Labor Day weekend

By JERRY FINK MANAGING EDITOR,

A 74-year-old Ninnekah man was killed in an odd traffic accident that took place on Monday, Aug. 25 in Grady County on U.S. 81 south of county road 1440.

According to the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, a vehicle was stopped in the road at about 6 p.m. as the driver was attempting to hook up a trailer that had come loose.

A second vehicle was parked behind the first one with its flashers on. A third vehicle came along and struck the second vehicle, which then struck the first vehicle causing the trailer to strike the driver of the Ninnekah man.

In another Aug. 25 accident, two people, a man and woman from Wichita Falls, Texas, were killed when their vehicle went off I-44 and struck a guardrail.

The three fatalities are among a rash of traffic deaths across the state in the days leading up to one of the deadliest holidays of the year, Labor Day Weekend, Aug. 29 through September 1.

In one of the most recent fatal accidents in this area, a Checotah man and a juvenile were killed on Sunday, Aug. 24, when their Jeep collided head-on with a tractor-trailer rig.

The accident took place south of Haskell at about 4 p.m. between West 33rd and West 43rd streets.

According to the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, Drake M. Long was southbound when for some reason he went left of center and collided with semi.

The National Safety Council estimates 424 people across the nation may die in traffic accidents during this Labor Day holiday period, the unofficial end to summer travel.

According to the NSC, the deadliest holidays in the U.S. are the summer holidays like Independence Day and Labor Day, followed by the winter holidays of Christmas and New Year's Day, and Thanksgiving.

These periods see elevated traffic fatalities, with alcohol-impaired driving and speeding being major contributing factors. The period between Memorial Day and Labor Day is also known as the "100 Deadliest Days" due to increased fatalities involving teen drivers.

In 2024, TRIP (A National Transportation Research Nonprofit), reported that Oklahoma ranked No. 13 among the states with the highest traffic fatality count.

It ranked No. 14 in the top states with the highest rural road fatality rate.

According to TRIP, Oklahoma's rural traffic fatality rate is almost double the fatality rate on all other roads, and one of the reasons for this is how the roads are constructed.

"Labor Day weekend travel requires extra caution," Mark Chung, executive vice president of safety leadership and advocacy at NSC, said. "We're still in the most dangerous season for roadway users, and everyone plays a role in preventing avoidable tragedies. Drivers who plan on traveling during Labor Day weekend must exercise increased caution and take the necessary steps to arrive safely."

More deaths on Oklahoma roads

On Aug. 24, there were fatalities in Carter County when a man was killed when he and a semi collided; and in Roger Mills County when a man traveling on U.S. 283 at SH 33 swerved to miss a deer and struck a tree; and in Oklahoma County when an 18-year-old motorcyclist lost control on I-40 and hit a wall at the onramp to I-35.

On Saturday, Aug. 23, another motorcyclist, a 49-year-old man from Oklahoma City, was killed near Checotah when his cycle went into a "death wobble," a witness told the OHP.

The intense vibrating and shimmying of the front end of the motorcycle caused it to go out of control on I-40 near Tiger Mountain Road about 12 miles west of Checotah.

Other fatalities took place on Aug. 23 in Beckham when a teenager lost control of his vehicle and rolled five times; and in Kingfisher County when the 12-year-old driver of a Polaris Side-by-Side with three passengers spun a donut causing the vehicle to roll over; and in Cotton County when a driver on I-40 lost control of his vehicle and hit a guardrail.

Also on Saturday, 58-year-old a Fort Coffee man died in LeFlore County when he lost control of his northbound vehicle on Lock and Dam Road and was ejected.

On Friday, Aug. 22 a 67-year-old Broken Arrow man was killed in Rogers County on I-44 at mile marker 254. The accident is under investigation. The OHP provided no other information.

In Nowata County a 60-year-old Delaware man died when he failed to yield at a stop sign on SH 10 at US 169 and was struck by a second vehicle.

On Aug. 21 a 49-year-old driver from Sallisaw driver was killed on SH 64 and N 4670 Rd. when he lost control of his vehicle, which crashed and caught fire.

Also on Aug. 21, in Haskell County a 47-year-old man from Meridian, Ms., died in a single vehicle accident. The OHP provided no details.

On Aug. 19, in Washita County, a 21-year-old motorist lost control of his vehicle on SH 152 at N 2340 Rd, rolled and came to a rest under the Two Baby Creek Bridge.

On Aug. 18, in Mc-Curtain County, two passengers in a Jeep Cherokee died when the vehicle left Holly Creek Road and struck a concrete bridge rail, went airborne and struck a tree.

Also on Aug. 18, in Ottawa County, a 36-year-old passenger in a vehicle that was parked on the side of the Will Rogers Turnpike at mile marker 315 with its lights flashing was killed when the car was struck by a semi.

A 73-year-old Manitou man was killed on Aug. 18 in a collision that took place in Kiowa County on US 62 at mile marker 67.

On Aug. 17, Dawnyal K. Hill, 52, died in a collision that took place in Okfuskee County on County Road NS 387 and Old Highway 62. The OHP furnished no other details.