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# **\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\***

**FOR RELEASE: AT WILL**

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## **MOTORISTS BEWARE - DEER ON THE ROAD!**

Missouri motorists are warned to be on special lookout as the largest number of auto accidents involving deer traditionally occur during the last three months of the year, an insurance industry spokesman said today.

“Statistics show that the majority of all deer/vehicle accidents in Missouri occur during the fall season of the year,” according to Stephen Witte, government affairs director of the Missouri Insurance Information Service. “Behavioral changes, especially increased activity associated with the rut or mating season, crop harvesting, bow hunting (September 15 – January 15) and firearms hunting (November 16-26) seasons are major factors.”

According to data compiled by the insurance industry, Missouri continues to rank as a high-risk state for deer/vehicle accidents. Another recently released insurance study notes that Missouri motorists have a one in 79 chance of colliding with an animal (typically deer).

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“Many deer/vehicle accidents could be prevented if drivers were aware of how to react when deer are observed on roadsides,” Witte said. “The most severe deer-related accidents often do not actually involve impact with a deer but result while trying to avoid the animal.”

The following list of safety tips are suggested by the Missouri Department of Conservation and the insurance industry to help reduce the number of deer-related accidents:

- ❖ Deer activity is highest during the dusk and dawn periods. Drivers should be particularly alert in the early morning and evening.
- ❖ Motorists should drive defensively when approaching wooded draws or creek bottoms that intersect highways, especially in agricultural settings.
- ❖ Newly constructed roads through deer habitat often have a rash of deer/vehicle accidents. Be on the lookout, especially in areas with “deer crossing” signs as this is evidence of past or somewhat frequent sightings.
- ❖ Drivers are advised to scan roadways for deer; if at night, motorists should look for deer eye reflections. Passengers can help “keep an eye out for deer”.
- ❖ Deer are often dazed or confused by vehicle headlights. When a deer is spotted, drivers should reduce speed but maintain control. Use emergency flashers or pump the brakes to alert vehicles approaching from behind. Try to scare the deer away from the roadside by flashing lights or sounding the horn.
- ❖ If a deer is observed crossing the road, reduce speed. Deer are social animals and often travel in family groups, so it is likely that others will follow.
- ❖ Most severe deer-related accidents result when loss of control occurs while trying to avoid a deer. Maintaining control of the vehicle is essential. It is recommended that a driver steer straight rather than risk losing control and colliding with oncoming traffic or hitting objects off the road.

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