

Making Faribault's roadways safer

Minnesota's roadways have become safer, according to a report released by the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA). The 2010 ENA National Scorecard on State Roadway Laws: A Blueprint for Injury Prevention examines roadway safety laws in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and scores each based on 14 criteria. Minnesota received a score of 11 out of a possible 14

Last year alone, District One Hospital staff cared for 229 patients after a motor vehicle or motorcycle accident. 27 of these patients were hospitalized or transferred to a major trauma center as a result of serious injury.

Since 2008 Minnesota has made several positive changes to improve roadway safety such as the primary seat belt law for all positions, booster seat laws until age eight and other child passenger safety laws. To make our roads safer and save lives, the Emergency Nurses Association study shows Minnesota still needs roadway safety laws that address motorcycle helmet use and ones to help address recidivism of driving while intoxicated, such as breath alcohol ignition interlock devices.

Each driver on the road must take seriously the laws we do have in place. Most motor vehicle injuries and deaths are preventable. And we should all do everything in our power to prevent them.

We treat hundreds of patients who are involved in crashes. And we know that there's nothing more heartbreaking than breaking the news to a wife, husband or parent that their loved one has died in a car crash. And nothing more frustrating than knowing that death could have been prevented.

We all have a role to play and we need to step up. Each of us should act now to do all she or he can to help prevent the motor vehicle crashes that claim far too many lives each year. Hang up your phone, wear a motorcycle helmet, wear your seatbelt and ensure that the children you transport are properly secured in their seat, infant seat or booster.

Cheryl Arnold is an emergency nurse and the Emergency Department Manager at District One Hospital in Faribault.