

## Trends in Unintentional Injury Death New Mexico, 2001-2010

Unintentional injuries are a significant and preventable public health problem. They are the third leading cause of death in New Mexico (NM), behind heart disease and cancer. Among 1 to 44 year olds, unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death. The unintentional injury death rate in NM was the highest in the nation in 2007 and was 1.8 times higher than the national rate in 2009. Motor vehicle traffic crashes, poisoning and falls were the three leading causes of unintentional injury death during 2001-2010. This report examines the trend in unintentional injury death and the leading causes during 2001 through 2010.

### Methods

Data on unintentional injury deaths among NM residents were obtained from the NM Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics. Unintentional injury deaths were analyzed by cause, age, gender, and race/ethnicity. The population data came from the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The population estimate for 2009 was used for the 2010 population estimate for NM since the 2010 population estimate is not currently available. Rates were age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. Standard Population.

### Results

In 2010, 1,208 NM residents died from an unintentional injury. The unintentional injury death rate in New Mexico increased 21.9% from 2001 to 2006, rising from 51.7/100,000 in 2001 to 63.0/100,000 in 2006. It declined to 57.6/100,000 in 2010. The highest unintentional injury death rate from 2006-2010 was among people 85 years of age and older, whose rate was 907.9/100,000, followed by 75-84 year olds (132.49/100,000). The lowest unintentional injury death rate occurred among 5-14 year olds (5.8/100,000), followed by 1-4 year olds (15.0/100,000). The male unintentional injury death rate was 78.9/100,000 for the 5 year time period, while

**Glenda Hubbard, MPH**

*Epidemiology and Response Division  
New Mexico Department of Health*

the female rate was 43.1/100,000. American Indians/Alaska Natives had the highest unintentional injury death rate (83.9/100,000), followed by Hispanics (66.6/100,000) from 2006-2010. The unintentional injury death rate among non-Hispanic Whites was 59.4/100,000, among Blacks was 43.7/100,000 and among Asian/Pacific Islanders was 27.8/100,000.

The leading cause of unintentional injury death in NM for all ages from 2001 to 2006 was motor vehicle traffic crash. Starting in 2007, poisoning surpassed motor vehicle traffic crash as the leading cause of unintentional injury death. Fall-related injury was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death from 2001-2010. In 2010, there were 420 poisoning deaths, 311 motor vehicle traffic crash deaths and 271 fall-related injury deaths. The three leading causes of unintentional injury death accounted for 83% of unintentional injury deaths in 2010.

The unintentional poisoning death rate increased from 11.3/100,000 in 2001 to 20.0/100,000 in 2010, representing a 77.0% increase during the ten year period. The motor vehicle traffic crash death rate decreased from 22.1/100,000 in 2001 to 14.8/100,000 in 2010, representing a 33.0% decrease during the ten year period. The fall-related death rate increased from 9.9/100,000 in 2001 to 16.5/100,000 in 2007 and declined to 12.9/100,000 in 2010, which represented a 30.3% increase during the ten year period. (Figure)

### *Unintentional Injury Death by Age Group*

Among children less than one year of age for 2001-2010, suffocation (N = 22) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death and motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 16) was the second leading cause of unin-

tentional injury death for the ten year period. Among 1 to 14 year olds, motor vehicle traffic crash (N= 210) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death and drowning/submersion (N = 48) was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death during the ten year period. Suffocation and fire/burn were tied for the third leading cause of unintentional injury death among this age group (N = 19 for each).

Among 15 to 24 year olds, motor vehicle traffic crash (N= 981) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death and poisoning (N = 304) was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death during the ten year period. Drowning/submersion (N = 37) was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death among this age group. Among 25 to 34 year olds, motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 334) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death for 2001-2005 and poisoning (N= 257) was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death. For 2006-2010, poisoning (N = 413) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death, followed by motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 302).

Among 35 to 44 year olds, poisoning (N = 987) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death and motor vehicle traffic crash (N= 624) was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death during the ten year period. Among 45 to 64 year olds, poisoning (N = 1,341) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death and motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 906) was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death during the ten year time period.

Among 65+ year olds, fall-related injury (N = 2,298) was the leading cause of unintentional injury death and motor vehicle traffic crash (N= 524) was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death during the ten year time period. Suffocation (N = 110) was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death among this age group.

From 2001-2010, children under one year of age had the highest drowning rate (3.6/100,000), followed by 1-4 year olds (3.1/100,000). The unintentional suffocation death rate was highest among adults 85+ years of age (12.8/100,000), followed by children under 1 year of age (8.0/100,000). The motor vehicle traffic crash death rate was highest among 15-24 year olds (32.1/100,000) followed by 25-34 year olds

(26.5/100,000). The poisoning death rate was highest among 35-44 year olds (34.6/100,000), followed by 45-54 year olds (33.9/100,000). The fall death rate was highest among 85+ year olds (518.5/100,000), followed by 75-84 year olds (90.2/100,000).

#### *Unintentional Injury Death by Gender*

The order of the leading causes of unintentional injury death differed by gender. The leading cause of unintentional injury death among males each year from 2001 to 2006 was motor vehicle traffic crash. Starting in 2007, poisoning surpassed motor vehicle traffic crash as the leading cause of unintentional injury death. Prior to 2007, poisoning was the second leading cause of unintentional injury death. The unintentional poisoning death rate among males increased 62.7% from 2001 (16.1/100,000) through 2010 (26.2/100,000). Fall-related injury was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death for each year of the ten year period.

Among females, motor vehicle traffic crash was the leading cause of unintentional injury death from 2001-2004, followed by fall-related injury and poisoning. Fall-related injury was the leading cause of unintentional injury death from 2005-2009, and in 2010 poisoning was the leading cause of unintentional injury death. Poisoning was the second leading cause of death in 2008 and 2009, behind fall-related injury. The unintentional poisoning death rate among females increased 113.6% from 2001 (6.6/100,000) through 2010 (14.1/100,000).

#### *Unintentional Injury Death by Race/ethnicity*

The order of the leading causes of unintentional injury death differed by race/ethnicity for 2001-2010. The leading cause of unintentional injury death among non-Hispanic whites for the ten year period 2001-2010 was fall-related injury (N = 1,759) followed by motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 1,361). Poisoning was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death (N = 1,335). Poisoning surpassed motor vehicle traffic crash as the second leading cause of death in 2007. In 2010 poisoning was the leading cause of unintentional injury death among non-Hispanic whites. The unintentional poisoning death rate among non-Hispanic whites increased 109.5% from 2001 (9.5/100,000) through 2010 (19.9/100,000). The leading cause of unintentional injury death among Hispanics from 2001-2010 was poisoning (N = 1,687) followed by motor vehicle traffic

crash (N = 1,625). Fall-related injury was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death (N = 713). The unintentional poisoning death rate among Hispanics increased 31.3% from 2001 (16.6/100,000) through 2010 (21.8/100,000).

The leading cause of unintentional injury death among American Indians/Alaska Natives from 2001-2010 was motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 819) followed by poisoning (N = 251). Fall-related injury was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death (N = 173). The unintentional poisoning death rate among American Indians/Alaska Natives increased 378.8% from 2001 (3.3/100,000) through 2010 (15.8/100,000).

The leading cause of unintentional injury death among Blacks from 2001-2010 was poisoning (N = 82) followed by motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 59). Fall-related injuries were the third leading cause of unintentional injury death (N = 19). The leading cause of unintentional injury death among Asian/Pacific Islanders from 2001-2010 was motor vehicle traffic crash (N = 24) followed by fall-related injury (N = 11). Poisoning was the third leading cause of unintentional injury death (N = 8).

## Discussion

In 2007, poisoning surpassed motor vehicle traffic crash as the leading cause of unintentional injury death in NM. About 90% of unintentional poisoning deaths in NM were due to drug overdoses. The majority of the increase in the drug overdose death rate has been attributed to prescription pain medications.<sup>1</sup> Drug overdose prevention activities in NM include providing drug treatment services to reduce drug overdose deaths. Drug treatment services include providing opioid replacement therapy, such as the use of methadone or buprenorphine, and providing prescription naloxone to opioid drug users to reverse the effects of the opioid to prevent death from overdose.

Motor vehicle traffic crashes are preventable. Restraints including seat belt use and use of age- and size-appropriate car seats and booster seats among children are the most effective way to prevent death in crashes.<sup>2</sup> Most drivers and passengers killed in crashes are unrestrained.<sup>3</sup> NM has a primary enforcement seat belt law. In NM, 41% of all fatal crashes in 2009 involved alcohol.<sup>4</sup> NM enforces driving while under the influence (DUI) laws including sobriety checkpoints. Mo-

tor vehicle traffic crash deaths in NM started to decrease in 2007. The decrease might partly be due to the sharp increase in gas prices and the decline in the economy starting in 2007, which may have affected driving behaviors such as driving less and driving at a reduced speed.

The fall-related death rate has been increasing in NM and the US. The increase may be linked to increased life expectancy that results in a larger proportion of older adults living with chronic diseases that cause them to be at increased risk and vulnerability to fall-related injuries.<sup>5</sup> The fall-related death rate increases dramatically with age. In NM, adults 65 years of age and older accounted for 85% of fall-related deaths in 2010. The group at highest risk is the 85+ year olds. The statewide New Mexico Adult Falls Prevention Coalition addresses fall prevention in NM in the following areas: home safety, physical activity, medication safety, and environmental safety in the community. In reducing the burden of falls, prevention strategies are most effective when multi-component strategies are implemented such as exercise to improve strength and balance, environmental modification in the home, medication management, treatment of chronic conditions that may contribute to fall risk and vision assessment and correction.<sup>6</sup>

## References

1. Shah, N., Unintentional illicit and prescription drug overdose death trends, 2008, *The New Mexico Epidemiology Report*, 2009 Nov:9.
2. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Lives saved in 2009 by restraint use and minimum-drinking-age laws. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: 2010. Publication no. DOT-HS-811-383. Available at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/811383.pdf>
3. Dept of Transportation (US), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Traffic Safety Facts: Highlights of 2009 Motor Vehicle Crashes. Washington (DC): NHTSA; 2010. Available at: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811363.PDF>
4. New Mexico Traffic Crash Information, 2009, Traffic Safety Bureau, Programs Division, New Mexico Department of Transportation.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Fatalities and injuries for falls among older adults – United States, 1993-2003 and 2001-2005, *MMWR* 2006; 55(45); 1221-1224.
6. Handbook of Injury Prevention and Violence, Chapter 3, "Interventions to Prevent Falls Among Older Adults", Doll, L.S., et al, Eds Spring 2007.

The New Mexico Epidemiology Report

C. Mack Sewell, Dr.P.H., M.S.  
State Epidemiologist

Michael G. Landen, M.D., M.P.H.  
Deputy State Epidemiologist & Editor

The New Mexico Epidemiology Report  
(ISSN No. 87504642) is published monthly

by the

Epidemiology and Response Division  
New Mexico Department of Health

1190 St. Francis Dr.

P.O. Box 26110, Santa Fe, NM 87502

Toll-Free Reporting Number:  
1-800-432-4404

24-Hour Emergency Number:  
(505) 827-0006  
[www.health.state.nm.us](http://www.health.state.nm.us)

Presorted  
Standard  
US Postage  
**PAID # 390**  
Santa Fe, NM

**Figure. Death Rates by Leading Causes of Unintentional Injury Death  
New Mexico, 2001-2010**

