Motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of injury deaths among Nebraska children, contributing to the deaths of 50 children each year, on average.

Motor vehicle crashes were also the fourth leading cause of injury-related hospital visits for Nebraska children, behind falls (#1), struck by or against (#2), and cut/pierce (#3) injuries.

Deaths and hospital visits due to motor vehicle crash-related injuries were highest among youth ages 15-19 years.

According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, in 2005 and 2007, about 1 in 3 Nebraska youth never, rarely or only sometimes wore a seatbelt while riding in a car driven by someone else. Within 30 days before the survey, nearly 1 in 5 Nebraska youth drove a car or other vehicle after drinking alcohol, and about 1 in 3 Nebraska youth rode in a car with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.

Motor vehicle crash injuries are preventable. Strategies to prevent motor vehicle crash-related injuries among youth include: (1) mass media campaigns focused on consequences of drinking and driving; (2) legislation, including graduated drivers’ licensing and primary seat belt laws; and (3) obeying all traffic laws, including those for seat belt and child seat restraint use.

For more information, contact the DHHS Injury Prevention and Control Program at (402) 471-2101 or visit www.dhhs.ne.gov/hew/hpe/Injury