

City 2005 road deaths near record

By [SARAH KENNEDY](#), CALGARY SUN

Traffic deaths spiked in Calgary in 2005, edging close to the 10-year record, causing concern to police, who feel one death is too many.

Sgt. Russ Van Aalst, in charge of collision reconstruction and hit and runs, said there was no trend in the 44 traffic-related deaths this year.

"Two years ago, we had a whole rash of accidents involving tractor trailers," he said.

"Last year it was hit and runs, but this year, it doesn't seem to be leading in any one direction."

Road deaths were up 25% from 35 in 2004, reflective of some of the worst years in recent memory, including the 10-year high of 50 in 1995.

Numerous cases involving drivers crossing over into oncoming lanes on Deerfoot Tr. got residents riled up enough to demand barriers be placed in the centre of the busy highway.

More weight was given to their calls following a tragic crash in August that killed a mother and daughter and an unborn baby.

The province responded to the demand in November by promising to build a post-and-cable barrier along the Deerfoot from 16 Ave. to Country Hills Blvd.

"I believe the barriers will prevent these accidents and that's good," said Van Aalst.

"If you're going to hit something, it's better to hit something going in the same direction."

Van Aalst said the number of alcohol-related fatalities are down.

But statistics show people still aren't getting the message about drinking and driving.

There were reportedly more than 2,700 people caught driving over the legal limit in the past year, and historical stats indicate about one-third of fatal crashes involve alcohol.

On a positive note, Van Aalst said, investigators have been able to solve all three of 2005's fatal hit and runs.

One of the most satisfying moments for Van Aalst was when police arrested suspect Colin Jones, 48, three days after Lindsay Giacomelli was hit and killed in a crosswalk on Bonaventure Dr., near Fairmont Dr. S.E. on March 17.

Police arrested Jones as he was about to board a plane at Pearson Airport in Toronto with a one-way ticket to England.

"It was unbelievably satisfying," said Van Aalst.

"It was one of the best investigations I was ever involved with."

The case is still in the courts.

Van Aalst said it was also positive to see that, despite the numerous construction zones, there weren't many traffic problems or accidents in those areas.

"I think the education aspect is key," he said.

"People are paying more attention to the public awareness campaigns."

- - -

DEADLY TOLL

Calgary traffic fatalities since 1992:

2004: 35

2003: 47

2002: 29

2001: 28

2000: 35

1999: 32

1998: 45

1997: 38

1996: 38

1995: 50

1994: 31

1993: 36

1992: 47