



# Motor Vehicle Accidents—Police

Over 100 police officers were seriously injured in vehicle accidents in the years 2000 to 2004 resulting in 4633 lost work days in Washington state. Nationwide, a leading cause of officer deaths is from vehicle incidents.



The injuries from motor vehicle accidents can sometimes be so serious, officers have to take time off work or in some cases are permanently disabled. These serious injuries are costly and affect your industrial insurance premiums. They contribute to the reason for the average base rate of over \$1 per hour per officer paid by state government. City and county governments pay slightly less. A police department with 10 full-time employees with an average rate of injuries (claims) would pay approximately \$20,000 in premiums in 2006. If you have a higher than average number of injuries, your “experience factor” could increase by 25% and your premiums would increase to \$1.25 per hour per employee. In a year, that would be an increase of \$5,000 to \$25,000 for ten full-time employees.

## Causes of Motor Vehicle Accidents

Driving is one of the most dangerous activities that officers engage in everyday, involving all kinds of weather and traffic conditions, with the added distractions of the police radio, radar unit, as well as watching everything that is going on in the vicinity of the patrol car.

An increasing sense of invincibility accompanies a higher level of risk-taking behavior.

Many police departments have trouble affording periodic driver training resulting in erosion of motor skills combined with age-related driving issues.

Some departments have weak supervision policies resulting in an officer acting alone frequently, rather than having someone to oversee work plans.

## Solutions to Prevent Motor Vehicle Accidents

**Training:** Provide driver’s training for both emergency and non-emergency situations, covering both basic and advanced skills, as well as periodic refresher training.

Train in classrooms, in-vehicle, use Skid-Car simulation, and computerized simulation.

Train officers to accept the limitations of the vehicle and road conditions.

**Safety Supervision:** Implement policies for vehicle operation, clearly define conditions to initiate and continue high-speed pursuits, monitor emergency dispatched assignments and responses, monitor proper vehicle placement and stop location selection sites.

