



## Portage County Combined General Health District

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### **Portage County Fatal Crash Review Board Investigates Crashes from the First Quarter of 2025**

Ravenna, OH – The Portage County Fatal Crash Review Board held its quarterly meeting on July 15, 2025, to analyze and review traffic fatalities.

There were four fatal crashes resulting in four fatalities from April through June 2025. Additionally, one fatal crash occurred from January through March 2025, resulting in one fatality. In comparison, the same time period in 2024 saw one crash and one death from April through June, and three crashes with three fatalities from January through March.

Police Chief Nicholas Shearer stated, “Distracted Driving IS impaired driving.” Ohio State Highway Patrol Lieutenant Erik Golias added, “People need to pay attention to the road and stay off their phones while driving, distracted driving is dangerous, and it will be enforced in Portage County.”

The Fatal Review Board, a requirement of Safe Communities, a program of the Portage County Health District, is responsible for reviewing fatal crashes, identifying trends, and recommending countermeasures. Although not all toxicology results have been received, at least one crash involved drugs and alcohol. Another involved excessive speed, with the victim not wearing a seat belt. One crash involved a high-speed motorcycle collision. Among the victims, two were over the age of 70, one was under the age of 18, and one was over the age of 30.

The leading contributing causes identified in these crashes were failure to yield, unsafe speed, and driving off the roadway.

Portage County Prosecutor Connie J. Lewandowski stated, “Time and time again we see young drivers - often with passengers their own age – make devastating choices behind the wheel. What starts as a thrill ride at excessive speeds too often ends in tragedy. As a prosecutor, I am committed to holding drivers accountable when recklessness leads to death. But as a mother, I am terrified every time my child gets in a car with another young driver. These aren’t accidents – they’re preventable, life-shattering decisions. No parent should have to bury their child because someone thought speeding was fun.”

With four preventable deaths in just three months, the Fatal Review Board is recommending continued public education efforts on traffic safety and sustained enforcement of Ohio traffic laws. These include laws related to distracted driving, seat belt use, speeding, and impaired driving.

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