In Stanislaus County, more people are killed from motor vehicle collisions than any other type of accidents. This rate increased more than five percent from 2000 to 2001 and now is almost twice as high as the state’s rate. Besides the emotional toll on the families and communities, it is estimated that Stanislaus County’s motor vehicle injuries and fatalities cost the community over $31.5 million dollars.

Since no one person/agency can fully address this large problem, HSA has convened the Safe Communities Coalition comprised of representatives from a variety of agencies and communities to work on this issue. Warren Brumley, a community representative, said “I became involved in the Safe Communities Coalition because I am concerned about the lack of enforcement and traffic control especially in the unincorporated areas of the county.” This group came together to develop a strategic plan using gathered and analyzed data. The plan was finalized and presented to the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors in February 2003.

The Safe Communities Coalition’s Strategic Plan focuses on the following areas to reduce injuries and deaths: pedestrians and bicyclists, child passengers, teen drivers/passengers, and the general motoring public. Lt. Larry Parshall from the Oakdale Police Department believes, “The Coalition provides us the opportunity to get ideas from others who are also working on traffic enforcement.” Efforts have been made to ensure youth are wearing properly fitting helmets when riding a bike, skateboard, scooter or inline skates. More car seat technicians are being trained so that parents have a place to have their car seat checked. To review this plan or to become involved in the Safe Communities Coalition, please contact the Health Promotion Department at 558-5657.

Tips for Protecting Your Family

- Slow down. Unsafe speed is one of the primary contributors to collisions.
- Don’t run red lights.
- Maintain a safe distance from other cars.
- Wear your seat belt. Ensure that everyone in your car is buckled up properly either with a seat belt or in an appropriate car seat or booster seat.
- Watch for pedestrians and bicyclists especially when dropping your children off at school. Find a safe place to park to unload children. If possible, stay away from congested areas.
- Don’t drink and drive.
- Bicyclists must follow the rules of the road.
- Wear a helmet. This is a requirement for those under 18 when riding a bike, skateboard, scooter or inline skates, but a smart decision for adults as well.
- Continually talk with your teenage driver about road safety, your expectations, and drinking and driving.