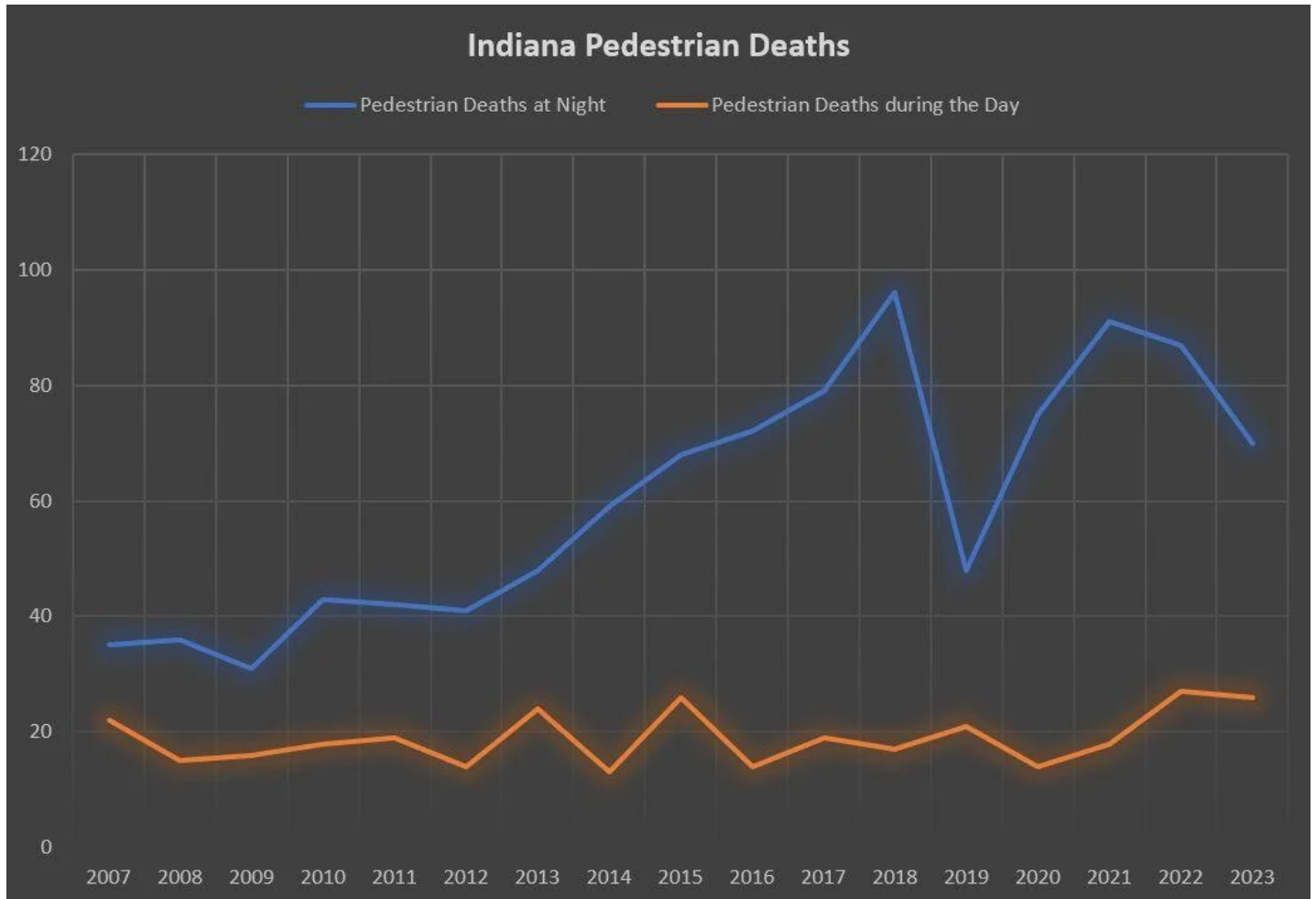


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TOPICAL

# Editorial: Pedestrian deaths on road a cause for concern

The Herald Bulletin Editorial Board  
Jan 25, 2024



The graph shows the upward trend of pedestrian deaths at night. The numbers from 2022 and 2023 are preliminary and are subject to change.

Data provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute



Indiana, like many states in the country, has big cars, dark roads, poorly designed bike lanes and walkways and lots of drivers on their cellphones.

So it may be little wonder that pedestrian deaths, which had been decreasing in the 1980s, is on the rise again. More than 7,500 pedestrians died in 2022 with 75% of those occurring in the dark. Cyclist deaths have also risen.

In Indiana, there were 75 pedestrian traffic fatalities in 2019, rising to 212 in 2021, according to an analysis by the Governors Highway Safety Association.

The association credits Indiana for having an “innovative” school bus stop arm violation enforcement program.

Known as SAVE, the project urges high visibility enforcement during school bus loading and unloading times. The Indiana Department of Education reports nearly 2,000 stop arm violations daily. Law enforcement needs to help curb this danger. Too many children are at risk.

There are so many factors playing a role in the increase in deaths.

Think back to a time when cars had manual transmissions, forcing drivers to use both hands and stay focused on the road.

If drivers use both hands nowadays, they may have a cellphone in one of them.

And not all blame goes to drivers. Pedestrians and cyclists sometimes aren't paying attention to traffic.

The U.S. Department of Transportation suggests the five-pronged Safe System approach to stemming the tide: safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads and post-crash care – contribute in different ways to provide a safety net that can protect people on foot as well as other road users. The department's report includes examples of how states are utilizing Safe System principles to improve pedestrian safety.

Law enforcement has to maintain efforts in focusing on dangerous driving behaviors.

Local communities can, based on data of frequented pedestrian traffic, install hybrid beacons to increase driver awareness of pedestrians at mid-block or at unsignalized intersections.

Roundabouts and rumble strips also slow traffic. Bike lanes should be clearly separate from vehicle lanes.

But the best way to avoid pedestrian deaths is for every driver to pay attention to his or her surroundings and watch the road. Stay off the phone; pull over to a safe area to have cellphone conversations.

Here are three suggestions that drivers should already know: Drive no faster than the speed limit. Don't drink alcohol and drive. Don't eat while driving.

Recognize areas where cyclists pedal. Watch out for electric bikes; they move much faster — some up to 30 mph — than regular bicycles. Similarly, electric scooters can pop out of nowhere; know where they are likely to be seen such as neighborhoods, downtown streets or schools.

If you're driving a hybrid, remember that walkers and cyclists can't hear you coming, or backing up for that matter.

The number of accidents between vehicles and pedestrians don't have to keep rising as long as we're all willing to use our smarts when driving.

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