

Sutter County Individualized Traffic Safety Report

Across the nation, rural areas are experiencing tremendous growth and transformation. Where once rural roads were used mainly to transport goods to market or to move farm machinery from location to location, rural roads now must accommodate commute and leisure trips that may clash with traditional transportation patterns. This influx of nontraditional traffic presents a major safety concern for rural road users.

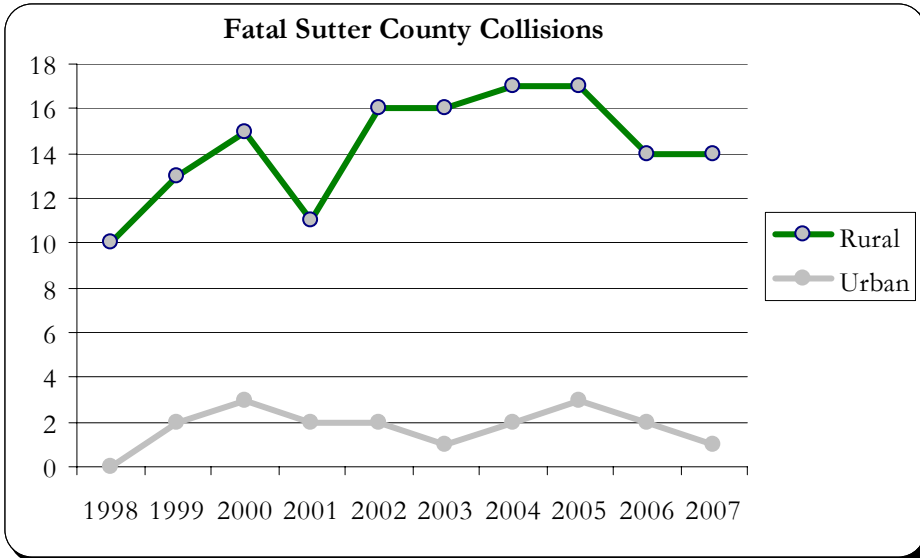
Nationally, 23 percent of the population lives in rural areas; yet, in 2006, 56 percent of the 42,642 traffic fatalities nationwide occurred in rural areas. In addition, the fatality rate in rural areas is over 4 times as high as the fatality rate (measured as deaths/100,000 persons) in urban areas. Preventing severe collisions is especially important in rural areas because statistics show that victims are more likely to die at the crash scene in rural areas than in urban areas. Of the 27,323 drivers killed in 2006, 66 percent of rural drivers and 51 percent of urban drivers died at the scene of the crash, and rural drivers represented 72 percent of drivers who died en route to the hospital. On a positive note, rural traffic fatalities did decrease 7 percent from 1997 to 2006, but the fact remains that rural areas account for a disproportionate number of fatalities. California safety statistics reflect a similar phenomenon. In 2006, only 7 percent of the population lived in rural areas, but rural areas accounted for 37 percent of the state's 4,236 traffic fatalities. See Table 1 below for more detail.

Having national and statewide data can help start discussions about roadway safety in rural areas, but more detailed safety data is necessary to find safety solutions at the local level. The Sacramento Area Council of Governments, as part of its Rural Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) planning effort, has compiled sample safety statistics (using the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System) for each county in the region in the hopes that these "safety reports" can be further customized to help bolster grant applications and inform public policy decisions that will make our rural roadways safer.

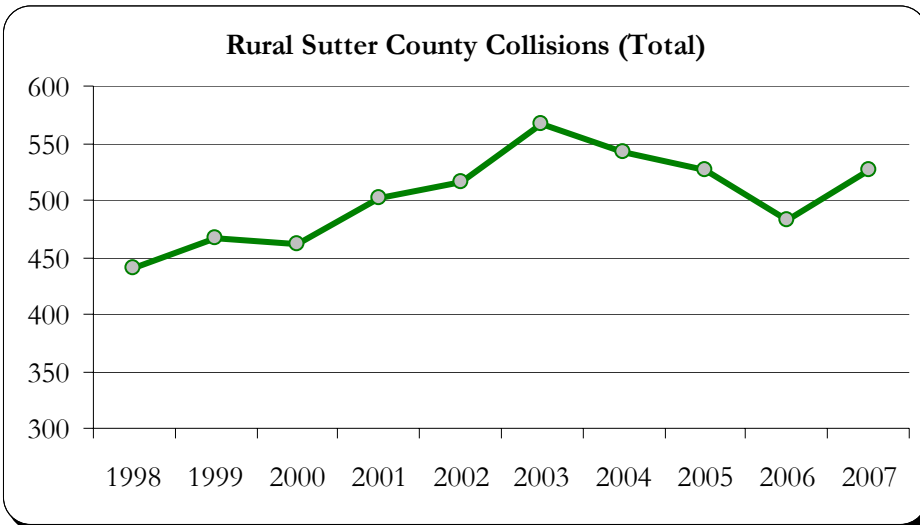
As it is part of the RUCS project, this safety report focuses on the rural areas of Sutter County. Unless otherwise stated, only fatal, rural crashes are included in the following safety statistics.

Sutter County in Perspective

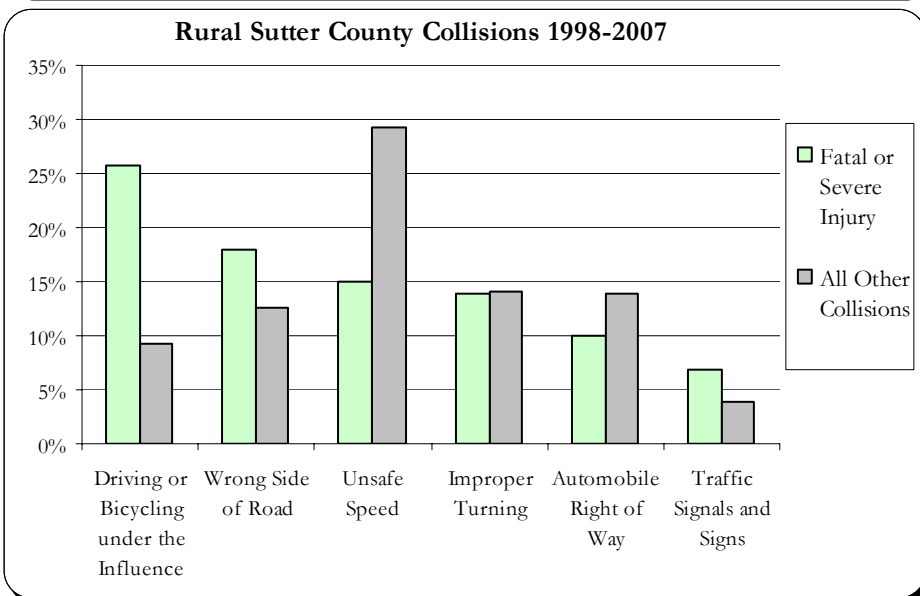
	Table 1: Summary Safety Statistics ¹							
	US (2006)		California (2006)		SACOG Region (2000)		Sutter County (2000)	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural ²	Urban	Rural
Population	231,897,219	67,501,266	33,844,533	2,613,016	1,750,054	185,952	67,106	11,824
% of population	77%	23%	93%	7%	90%	10%	85%	15%
Fatalities	18359	23,339	2,659	1,576	66	165	3	18
% of fatalities	44%	56%	63%	37%	29%	71%	14%	86%
Fatalities/100,000 persons	7.9	34.6	7.9	60.3	3.8	88.7	4.5	152.2



- Rural Sutter County saw a slight upward trend in fatal collisions from 1998-2005, growing from 10 fatal collisions in 1998 to 17 in 2004/2005. Since then, fatalities have dropped down to 14.
- Although 2001 saw the second fewest number of fatalities, it saw a relatively high number of total collisions, with the 6th highest total in the 10-year period.

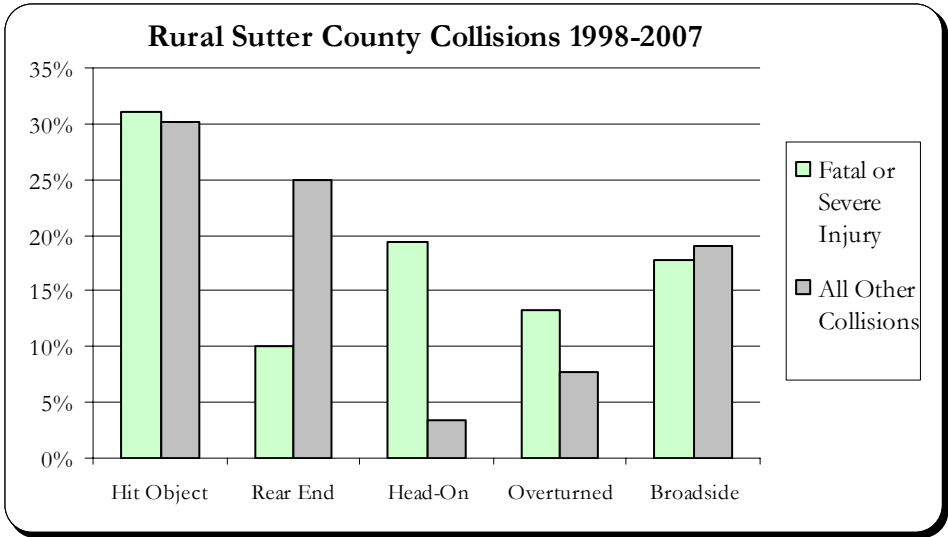


- From 1998-2007, total collisions in rural Sutter County have remained relatively stable with a slight upward trend. Yearly collisions typically range from 450-650.

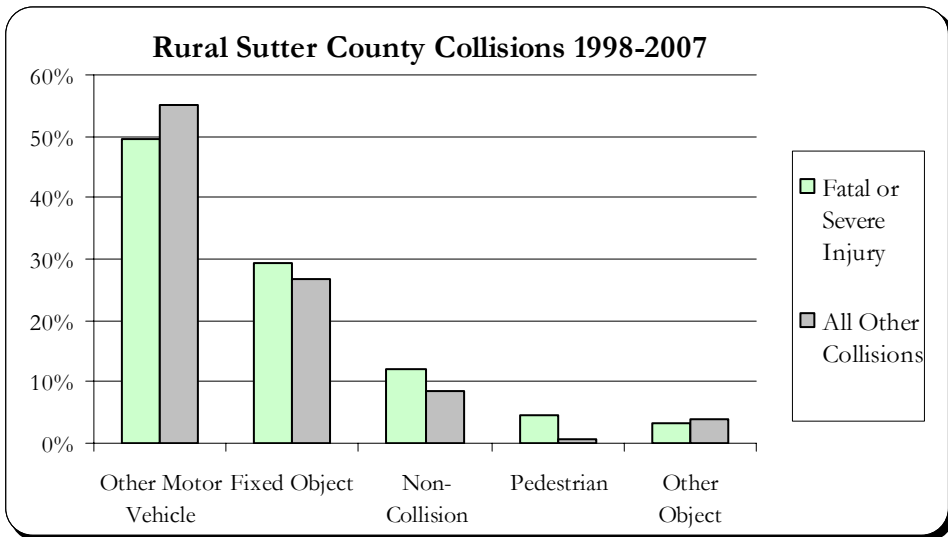


- Driving or bicycling under the influence caused over 25 percent of fatal or severe injury accidents and 9 percent of “all other collisions³.” Unsafe speed was overwhelmingly the most common cause of total collisions, but it caused a much greater percentage of “other collisions” than it did for fatal or severe injury collisions.
- Improper turning was the only violation that caused an equal percentage of fatal or severe injury and “other collisions.”

	Table 2: Rural Sutter County Detailed Collision Data						
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Sutter Total	Region Total
Total Collisions	566	542	526	483	527	2,644	86,307
<i>Property Damage Only (PDO)</i>	320	328	331	291	305	1,575	55,049
% PDO	56.5%	60.5%	62.9%	60.2%	57.9%	59.6%	63.8%
<i>Injury</i>	230	197	178	178	208	991	30,447
% Injury	40.6%	36.3%	33.8%	36.9%	39.5%	37.5%	35.3%
<i>Fatal</i>	16	17	17	14	14	78	811
% Fatal	2.8%	3.1%	3.2%	2.9%	2.7%	3.0%	0.9%
<i>Pedestrian Killed</i>	0	2	1	1	0	4	116
<i>Bicyclist Killed</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1	22
<i>Motorcyclist Killed</i>	1	2	1	2	1	7	113
Fatal Collisions							
<i>Alcohol Related</i>	7	9	6	5	3	30	295
<i>Speeding Related</i>	2	2	0	2	3	9	95
<i>Truck Collision</i>	3	1	4	2	4	14	67
<i>Hit Object Collision</i>	7	5	3	7	4	26	278
<i>Head-On Collision</i>	4	4	4	2	3	17	117
<i>Broadside Collision</i>	2	1	5	1	2	11	141
<i>Overtaken Collision</i>	1	3	3	0	3	10	79
<i>Occurred on a Weekday (M-Th)</i>	10	5	7	7	10	39	376
<i>Occurred on a Weekend (F-Su)</i>	6	12	10	7	4	39	435
<i>Occurred during Daylight</i>	11	6	9	10	5	41	420
<i>Occurred after Dark (with or without street lights)</i>	5	10	7	4	9	35	360
Fatal Collision Location							
<i>Route 99</i>	4	5	8	4	5	26	*
<i>Garden Highway</i>	3	2	1	0	0	6	*
<i>Intersection Collision</i>	3	1	5	2	2	13	98
<i>State Highway</i>	5	7	13	9	8	42	335
<i>Not State Highway</i>	11	10	4	5	6	36	476



- Hit object and broadside collisions cause more or less an equal percentage of fatal and severe injury collisions and “other collisions.” However, rear end, head-on, and overturned collisions disproportionately cause a greater percentage of one kind of accident than the other. This difference is most clearly seen in head-on collisions.



- From 1998-2007, collisions with other motor vehicles were by far the most common cause of total accidents. However, fixed object collisions also accounted for a significant number of collisions.

Further Study

This safety report highlights only a small portion of the data available for future analysis. SACOG believes this type of detailed data can make our region’s safety projects very competitive in federal and state safety programs such as the High Risk Rural Roads (HR3) program. For more information about the data used in this report or to request technical assistance for your agency, please contact Christine Scherman at cscherman@sacog.org or by phone at 916-340-6262.

¹ In Table 1, U.S. and California safety data were taken from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). NHTSA used the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) to collect the data. Population data were taken from the American Community Survey (ACS) census file 1. County-level rural/urban population data were not available for 2006, so 2000 data were used for Sutter County and the region. Sutter County and region fatalities (for year 2000) were taken from SWITRS.

² “Rural” as defined by the 2000 census is all territory, population, and housing units located outside an urbanized area or an urban cluster. An urban cluster is a densely settled area (1,000 people/sq. mile) with a population of 2,500-49,999 and any surrounding areas with 500 people/sq. mile. “Rural” as defined by the SWITRS database is any unincorporated area and areas with a population of fewer than 2,500 people.

³ “All other collisions” refers to collisions resulting in complaint of pain, other visible injury, and property damage only.