

Pedestrian-related deaths jumped in 2007

A pedestrian crosses the busy intersection of 19th Avenue and Irving Street. Pedestrian deaths have increased from 2006 to 2007.

Will Reisman, The Examiner

February 15, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO - Traffic collisions involving pedestrians in San Francisco increased from 2006 to 2007, but a study points out another glaring statistic — the number of senior-citizen deaths from these accidents.

According to a report released Thursday at the City Operations and Neighborhood Services Committee meeting, there was a 50 percent rise in fatalities in pedestrian-versus-auto collisions. The 2007 police report by the traffic division of the police department also points out that there were 13 pedestrian deaths involving San Francisco residents older than 65 — a stark increase from the two recorded fatalities in 2006.

“The numbers regarding the seniors are alarming, and I wish I had an answer,” said Sgt. Bob Guinan of the traffic division. “Single-year totals are a little difficult to gauge, which is why I think we probably have a better sense of what’s going by looking at broader trends over a number of different years.”

Pi Ra, a representative for the Senior Action Network, said broad pedestrian safety studies failed to take into account all potential factors.

“Some of these studies do a very good job of increasing pedestrian safety for seniors,” Ra said. “But they don’t do quite enough. Traffic was down during the dot-com crash from 2000 to 2004, and more seniors are out walking the streets now. The authorities really need to examine the 2007 statistics carefully, so they can come up with some accurate safety measures.”

Manish Champsee of WalkSF, a citizens advisory group monitoring pedestrian safety, said The City needs to incorporate more walking avenues into urban planning projects.

“We really respect people’s need to come and go quickly,” Champsee said. “But everyone has to walk, no matter what, and pedestrians shouldn’t be in danger of suffering a fatal or life-changing injury because of dangerous traffic patterns.”

Bond Yee, director of the Municipal Transportation Agency’s Parking and Traffic Division, said improvement efforts made by the department — including signal upgrades, red-light photo enforcement and school safety programs — were a main reason pedestrian injuries in The City dropped from 985 in 1998 to 743 in 2006.

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