

road safety issues

Far North District

Land Transport New Zealand has prepared this road safety issues report. It is based on reported crash data and trends for the 2000–2004 period. The intent of the report is to highlight the key road safety issues and be a resource to identify possible ways to reduce the number of road deaths and injuries in the Far North District.

The Far North District has one of the higher crash rates per head of population in New Zealand. The population and roading network of the Far North District are larger and it has a higher severity of crashes compared with most similar authorities. Nationally, fatal and serious crashes on urban roads made up 19 percent of injury crashes but in the Far North District the figure was 34 percent.

Rural crashes accounted for 85 percent of all reported injury crashes in the district. The proportion of fatal and serious crashes reduced in 2003 and 2004. In the past two years, increased reporting of all crashes to Police has helped to better define the true risk.

Crashes on the state highway network made up 60 percent of rural crashes and 40 percent of urban crashes in the district.

The social cost of crashes in the district was \$93.5 million in 2004, equating to over \$1,600 for each Far North District resident. Working together to develop solutions can have a significant impact on changing attitudes and improving road safety within Far North District communities.

Major road safety issues

Far North District

- Alcohol
- Loss of control on curves
- Passenger casualties
- Road and environment factors

Nationally

- Speed
- Alcohol
- Failure to give way
- Restraints



2004 road trauma for Far North District



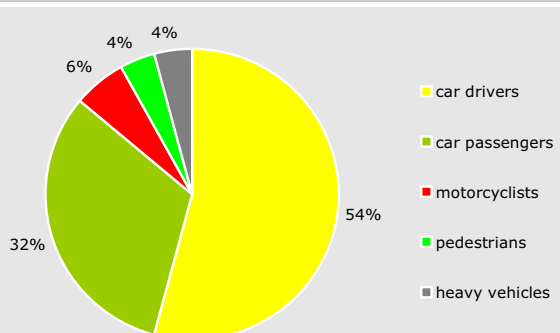
Deaths	19
Serious casualties	59
Minor casualties	257



Fatal crashes	12
Serious injury crashes	44
Minor injury crashes	166
Non-injury crashes	330

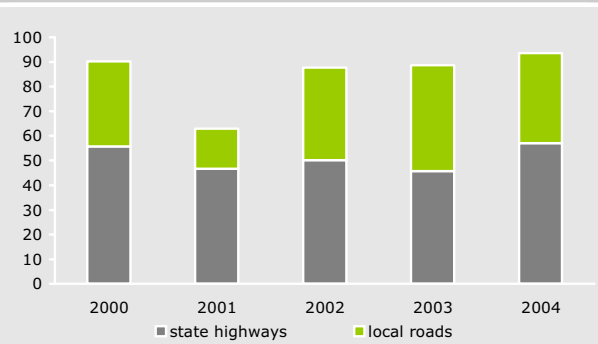
Fatal and serious casualties

User type 2000–2004



Estimated social cost of crashes*

Social cost (\$ million)



*The estimated social cost includes loss of life or life quality (estimated by the amount New Zealanders are prepared to pay to reduce their risk of fatal or non-fatal injury), loss of output due to injuries, medical and rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, and property damage. These costs are expressed at June 2004 prices.

Alcohol

From 2000 to 2004, alcohol contributed to 20 percent of all casualty crashes in the Northland Region, compared with a national figure of 13 percent. The Northland Police District recorded the highest proportion of crashes involving alcohol in the country. The Far North District stands out in Northland Region figures with 24 percent of all casualty crashes involving alcohol. The district had the third highest proportion of crashes involving alcohol-affected drivers, behind the Waimate District and the Chatham Islands.

In only serious injury and fatal crashes, 38 percent involved an alcohol-affected driver in the Far North District, the highest of the Northland authorities. Other road safety issues identified in this report were aggravated by the influence of drinking and driving.

On rural roads of the district, the three most common contributing factors to crashes were alcohol, excessive speed and road factors. Alcohol has increased as a factor, with around 22 percent of open road crashes now involving alcohol.

The age of alcohol-affected drivers contributing to crashes in the Far North District peaked in the 15 to 19 year age range, but did not significantly reduce until beyond the mid-40s age group.



Alcohol-related crashes occurred over a 12-hour period from 4 pm through to 4 am. The number of crashes increased dramatically on Saturday and Sunday.

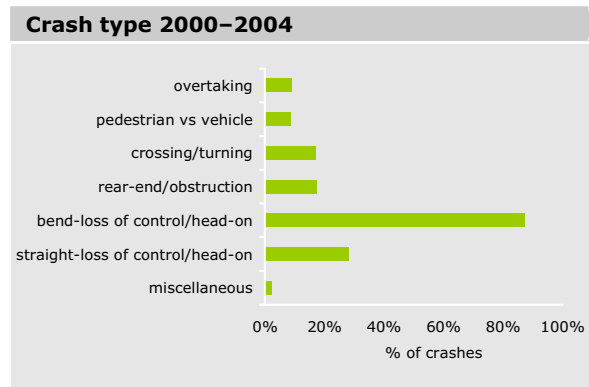
In urban areas, excessive speed and alcohol both featured highly. Alcohol contributed to 30 percent of urban crashes (nationally 12 percent) while speeding was a factor in 28 percent (nationally 12 percent). Both of these factors have increased in urban crashes each year.

Alcohol-related crashes occurred throughout the district, most commonly around Kaitaia, Ahipara, and Awanui. The Taheke, Kerikeri and Kawakawa areas also figure in the crash data. Local communities can have an influence in reducing the level of drink-driving by becoming involved in educational and advertising programmes, providing input to roading solutions and supporting enforcement action.

Loss of control on curves

Around 125 injury crashes each year in the Far North District resulted from a driver losing control of their vehicle on a curve. On the open road network, loss of control on curve crashes were the most common crash type, making up 58 percent of all crashes. Although other authorities have many crashes of this type, the incidence in the Far North District is higher. Considering just the rural local road network and excluding state highways, an even higher proportion (65 percent) of crashes was due to loss of control on curves.

For urban areas nationally and in similar authorities, the most common crash type was intersection crashes. However, in the Far North District loss of control crashes on bends were the most common, the same as for rural roads.



Speeding, or travelling too fast for the conditions, was a factor in 29 percent of open road crashes and has increased each year. Speed factors were often combined with alcohol, poor handling and poor judgement. Along with road or environmental factors, they contributed to a high proportion of the crashes in the district.

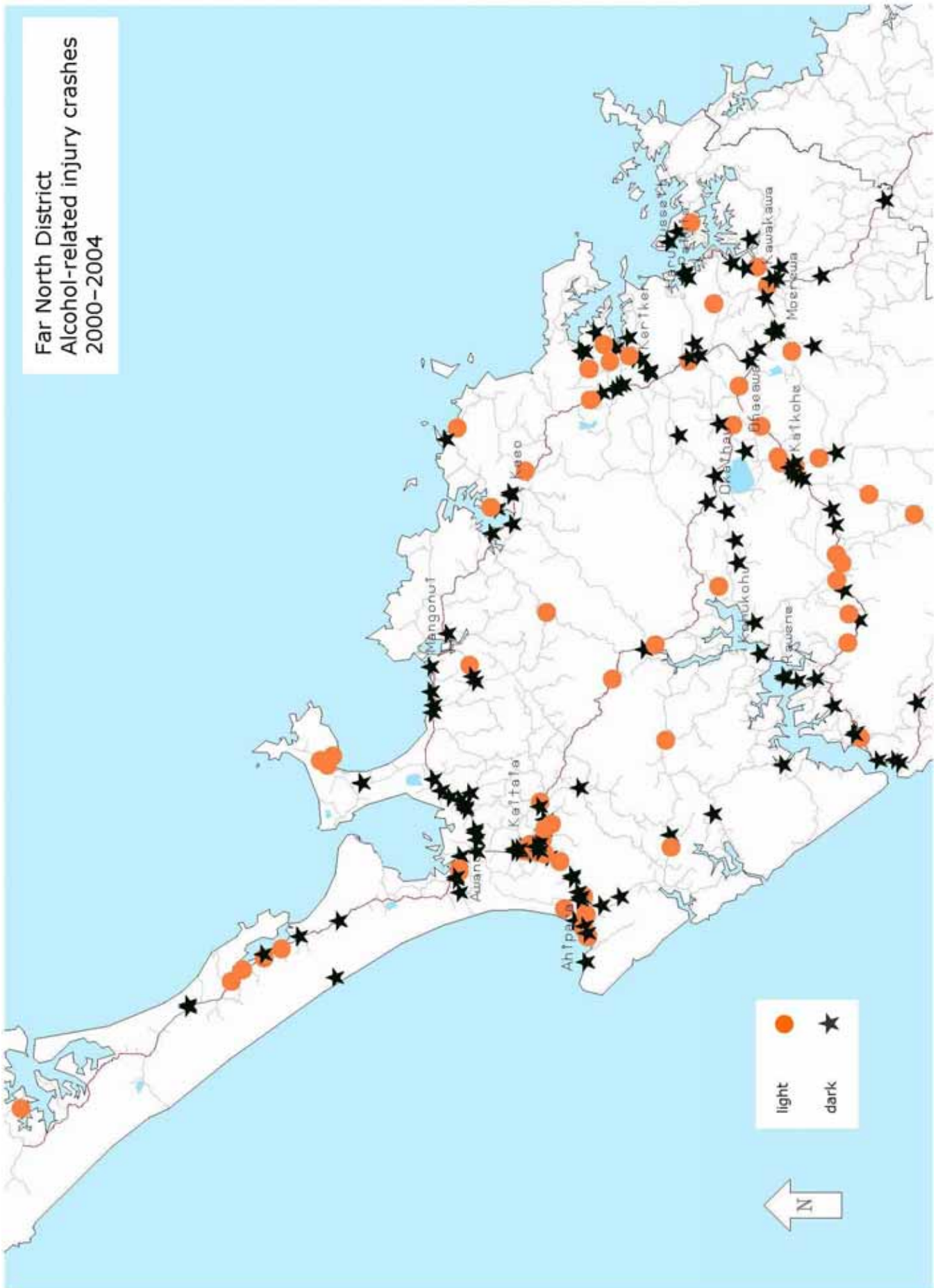
Learner licence holders have been increasingly injured in crashes on the open road, which include loss of control type crashes.

Loss of control crashes can be addressed at three levels:

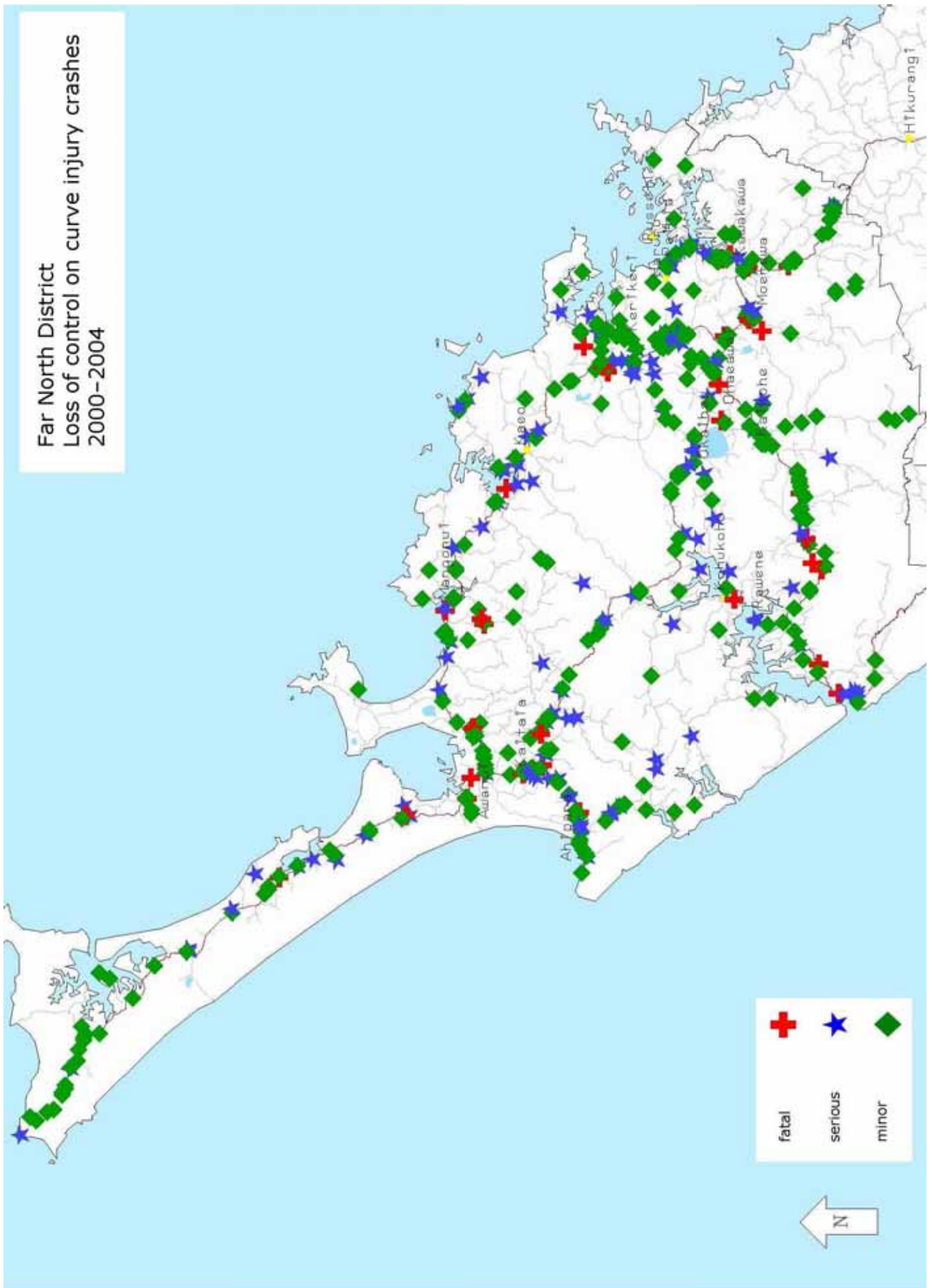
- what happens before a crash
- what happens during the crash that contributes to how severe the crash is
- what happens after the crash that can affect the degree of harm caused.

Road safety partner agencies and the community working together to address the problem at all levels will be an effective way to make improvements.

Far North District
Alcohol-related injury crashes
2000–2004



Far North District
 Loss of control on curve injury crashes
 2000–2004



Passenger casualties

It is not always drivers who are injured in crashes. Injured passengers were more common in the Far North District than in the Whangarei or Kaipara Districts. Between 2000 and 2004, passengers made up 36 percent of casualties on rural roads and 30 percent on urban roads of the district. The number has increased each year over the five-year period.

The proportion of passenger casualties was high throughout the Northland Region. They made up one third of road users injured, compared with the Auckland Region where injured passengers made up less than a quarter (22 percent) of all casualties.

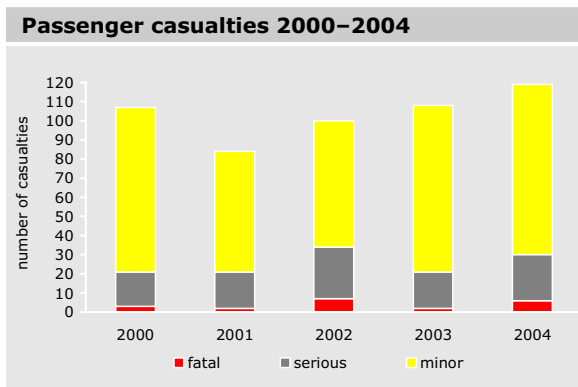
Children and young adults were vulnerable to injury as passengers. The peak age group for injured passengers was 15 to 19 years and children aged five to 14 years were over-represented.

Safety belt and restraint wearing is important if passengers are to survive a crash or reduce the severity of their injuries. The use of restraints has improved, with studies in the Far North District showing 94 percent of front seat occupants and 90 percent of rear seat passengers now wear safety belts.

The lack of use of child restraints is still a problem. Nationally, 86 percent of children were restrained compared with 84 percent across Northland but only 78 percent in the Far North District.

Most passenger casualties occur in cars and vans but about 14 truck occupants are injured in crashes annually in the Far North District.

Passengers in a vehicle with an alcohol-affected driver or a driver that is speeding are more likely to be killed or injured in a crash. The severity of injuries sustained by passengers (not including the drivers) for the last five years is shown in the graph below.



From the data available, Maori, who make up 44.7 percent of the district's population, accounted for 51 percent of crash casualties. Nationally, Maori made up 19 percent of road casualties and are 14.7 percent of the population.

Road and environment factors

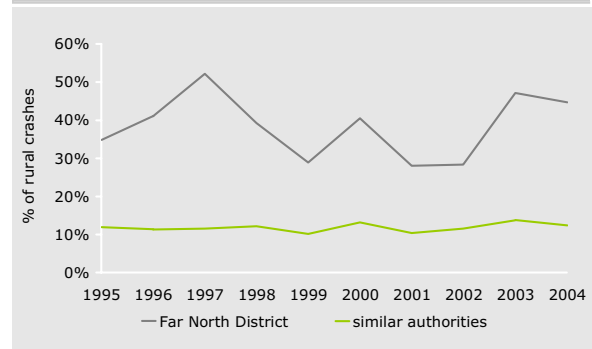
Road and environment factors can contribute to crashes, particularly those that involve loss of control. Road factors are now given as the most common contributing factor in Far North District open road crashes. They are also notable in urban crashes.

A wet, slippery road was the most common road factor. A slippery surface can be due to rain, loose material, an unsealed road surface, a worn surface, mud, oil or other contaminants on the road. These factors usually become evident during wet weather. They are more pronounced when wet weather follows a long dry spell, when contaminants have built up on the road surface.

Another common factor on local roads was the road being slippery due to loose metal. About 23 percent of crashes occurred on unsealed roads across the whole Far North District road network. For the local authority road network, this rose to 45 percent of crashes. In 2003, there were 45 crashes reported on unsealed local roads, and 42 in 2004. Pungaere Road, Cape Reinga Road, Backriver Road and Foreshore Road recorded the highest number of crashes.

Driver inexperience and excessive speed for the conditions add to the effect of road factors in crashes.

Crashes on unsealed rural local roads 1995–2004



Roadwork sites also commonly have unsealed or slippery road surfaces. It is important that roadwork sites are well managed to warn motorists of the specific hazards.

Crashes at night have become more common. In 2004, the proportion of crashes in urban areas of the district at night was 48 percent, compared with 31 percent nationally. Ahipara, Omapere/Opononi and Kaikohe, as well as SH 1 through the urban area of Kaitiā, had a number of crashes reported at night.

A high proportion of crashes involved a roadside object being struck, increasing the chance of serious injury. On urban roads the most common hazards were ditches, trees and banks. On rural roads, ditches were highly represented. Narrow road widths and narrow shoulders allow limited space for recovery if a driver loses control.

Road environment

The Land Transport New Zealand crash reduction monitoring database shows that crashes have reduced due to work done in crash reduction studies. Since the programme of crash reduction studies was started, the crashes at study sites have reduced by 34 percent nationally. In the Far North District, crashes at study sites have reduced even more, by 47 percent.

Outstanding recommendations from recent studies should be implemented as soon as possible.

Analysis of the crashes at all completed sites should be undertaken regularly to ensure that safety has been improved and sites should be re-examined if no improvement has occurred. Regular crash reduction studies should be undertaken to continue the reduction of crashes.

Where to get more information

For more specific information relating to road crashes in the Far North District, please refer to the 2000 to 2004 road safety data report, the Land Transport New Zealand crash analysis system or contact the office listed opposite.

Contacts

Land Transport New Zealand
Partnership Manager Northern
Peter Kippenberger
Private Bag 106602
Auckland
Phone 09 969 9800

Regional Education Officer
Karen Sandoy

Senior Road Safety Engineer
John Garvitch

See contact details bottom right of this page.

Road Safety Co-ordinator

Tania Tawhara
PO Box 200
Kaitaia
Phone 09 408 1380

Far North District Council

Private Bag 752
Kaikohe
Phone 09 405 2750 or 0800 920 029

Transit New Zealand

Area Engineer Northland
Richard Green
PO Box 1899
Whangarei
Phone 09 430 4355

New Zealand Police

District Traffic Manager
Inspector Rob Lindsay
Private Bag 9016
Whangarei
Phone 09 430 4500

Mid/Far North Area Controller

Inspector Mike Rusbatch
PO Box 31
Kerikeri
Phone 09 407 4850

Highways North

Incident reporting
Phone 0800 111 655



Whangarei Office
Cnr Rathbone and Robert
Streets
PO Box 1664
Whangarei

Phone 09 459 6315
Fax 09 459 6318

www.landtransport.govt.nz