

Traffic accidents are 'the biggest killers'

PUBLIC COOPERATION VITAL TO CURB DEATHS; DRIVER NEGLIGENCE ADDS TO POLICE WOES

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Staff Reporter

Dubai Traffic accidents are the biggest killer in the UAE after heart disease and strokes and the situation has been likened to a "full-scale street battle" by police who are desperate for a solution.

Road fatalities in the country have reached 'epidemic' proportions, according to officers.

A total of 755 people lost their lives last year as a result of road crashes.

The deaths were a result of more than 10,800 accidents, and also caused more than 10,000 injuries.

It brings the death toll on the UAE's roads over the last 20 years to 14,000.

Major Ahmed Abdul Qader Al Hajiri said the situation is "dire", adding that major natural disasters, which have hit other countries, have not had such a catastrophic effect as the high level of negligence displayed by drivers in the country.

Disproportionate

They said the deaths included a disproportionately high number of UAE nationals, at 213, compared to 148 Pakistanis and 141 Indians - even though UAE nationals account for less than one fifth of the population.

Major Al Hajiri, who heads the security awareness unit at Dubai Police, said the responsibility to cut these "senseless deaths" now falls on all institutions in the country and not just the police.

Another senior officer agreed, but claimed that the public is blaming the police for the bad traffic situation forgetting that it is each individual's responsibility.

Brigadier Abdul Rahman Rafie, the director of the Dubai Traffic Police, said: "We at the police have left no stone unturned to try and curb the fatalities. We



HADRIAN HERNANDEZ/Gulf News

Collision course

An accident involving a car and a motorcycle along Al Ittihad road early yesterday. As many as 755 people lost their lives last year as a result of road crashes.

have installed speed traps, punished errant motorists, conducted awareness campaigns and honoured good motorists. What we need is public cooperation," he said.

He added that other ministries should get actively involved to try and stem the unnecessary loss of lives and improve motorists' adherence to basic safety standards.

"It is important for schools and colleges to be involved in this battle as drivers aged 18 to 32 caused 58 per cent of all fatal accidents," he said.

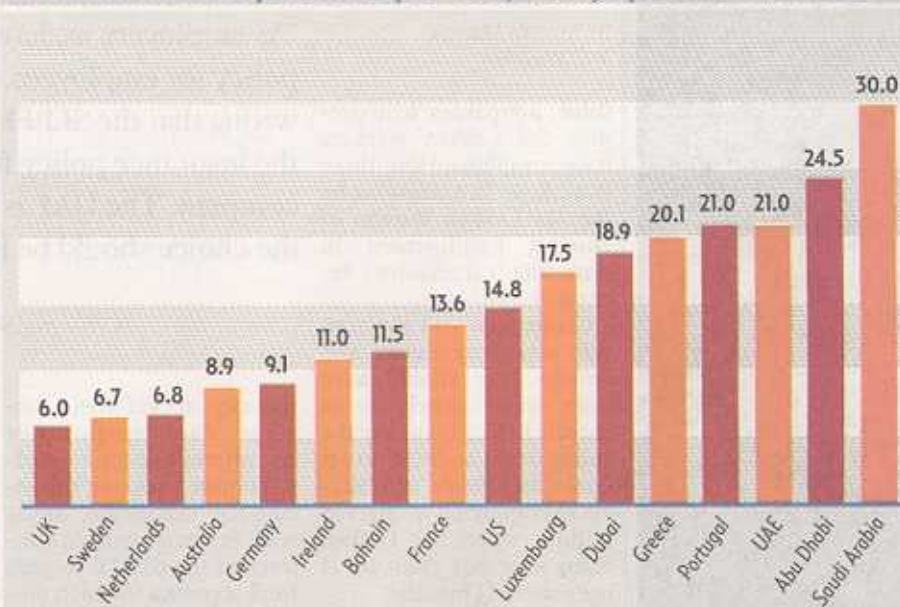
Major Al Hajiri gave a break-down of last year's accidents and said that 344 of the deaths were drivers, 226 were passengers and 185 pedestrians.

The injuries included 736 people who were seriously injured or disabled.

The death toll among people from other GCC countries was 32, while 21 people from Egypt died and 20 from Syria.

Vehicles overturning

Accident related fatalities per 100,000 population (2002)



Source: Dubai Traffic Police

EDMOND COLAÇO/Gulf News graphic

caused most of the fatalities last year, killing 179 motorists. Accidents in which pedestrians were involved was the second highest cause of deaths.

Third was collision from the sides which killed 100 people.

Some 92 people lost their lives after they were involved in accidents in

which the vehicle hit a stationary object. Pile-ups killed 84 motorists and caused 76 severe injuries. Head on collisions caused 43 fatalities while collisions

while turning resulted in 19 fatalities. Seven motorists lost their lives when they hit animals while seven passengers died when they fell off pick-up trucks.