

Calaveras traffic fatalities nearly doubled

CHP commander: No common theme to explain why

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Calaveras County roads have been more deadly this year in comparison to 2016.

That grim fact and other statistics concerning traffic on Calaveras County roadways were presented by California Highway Patrol Lt. Cmdr. John Warren during his talk last week at the monthly Good Morning Calaveras program put on by the Calaveras Chamber of Commerce at Mark Twain Medical Center.

Calaveras statistics from the beginning of this year to Oct. 20 were in Warren's presentation, along with those for all of 2016.

As of Oct. 20, there were 15 fatalities on Calaveras roads this year and there were nine in eight fatal collisions during 2016. However, since Oct. 20, Calaveras has had two more fatalities for a total of 17 this year.

Warren, who is commander of the CHP office in San Andreas, said there is no common theme to explain the spike in local traffic fatalities.

Seven of the fatalities involved motorcyclists.

There has been a surge of motorists and cyclists visiting the county and being unfamiliar with local roads and going too fast could be contributing factors, he said.

Increases in traffic to the area were indicated by CHP statistics for motorist services and enforcement contact numbers, both of which are more than 2016 totals.

Motorist services numbers for 2017 are 2,839 compared to 2,647 in 2016, while enforcement contacts this year have been 5,149 compared to 4,981 last year.

Total traffic collision numbers for 2017 are down slightly – 578 to 628 – with more than two months left until the end of the year. However, injury collisions have already surpassed last year's totals – 246 this year compared to 240 in 2016.

Driving under the influence arrests are quickly approaching last year's totals. As of Oct. 20, local CHP officers had made 145 DUI arrests compared to 157 in 2016.

The CHP's San Andreas office covers 1,100 square miles, Warren said. It is one of 103 CHP area offices and has a staff of nearly 30 uniformed officers and support personnel.

Warren is in his first year as the local CHP commander. He has been with the CHP for 21 years and began his career in San Francisco with stops in San Jose, Dublin and the protective service branch of the CHP that guards state officials and state buildings.

Good Morning Calaveras is a monthly breakfast meeting for local officials, community leaders, business owners and staffs to engage and learn from each other.