



Erie Insurance Cautions Motorists to Stay Alert for Deer

Erie, Pa. --- November 13, 1997 --- When deer find their way onto the roadway and into your path, the result can be disastrous. In the past three years, accidents involving such encounters have increased at an alarming rate. During that time Erie Insurance Group has recorded more than 48,000 such claims throughout the District of Columbia, Indiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. The average claim resulted in more than \$1,300 in damage, usually to the front end of a vehicle.

In Pennsylvania alone, more than 40,000 deer collisions occur each year. Most people are surprised by deer. It's not usually the first one you see that you hit, it's the second or third deer that's following, since deer usually run in groups. Deer collisions can occur on local roads and highways, presenting a problem to back road and interstate drivers. State Departments of Transportation post warnings along sections of interstate highways known to have high deer populations and activity to prevent meetings between deer and cars, or at least alert drivers of the possibility. Fencing that is installed to keep vehicles and pedestrians from entering the highway at locations other than on-ramps also helps keep wildlife off the road. But deer have been known to actually jump the barrier, or find passage through damaged fencing that eludes maintenance crews.

Since there is no guaranteed method of preventing a deer collision, experts agree motorists should follow these precautions:

- Slow down and be alert in posted deer crossing areas.
- Be especially vigilant before dawn and a few hours after dawn and in the hours before and after dusk.
- Also be aware of the peak periods when deer are more likely to run into roadways -- October, November and December, which is their mating season, and March, April and May, when doe are preparing to give birth and young deer are setting off on their own.
- If you see one deer, assume that more are following.

Remember, your vehicle's headlights totally blind deer, rendering them helpless. They won't move out of your way. If you do hit a deer, report it to local authorities as soon as possible and to your insurance company. Do not get out on the roadway and try to remove the carcass yourself. Not only are you placing yourself in the path of other vehicle traffic, you also can't be certain the animal is actually dead. Wounded animals may retaliate on anything or anybody within reach.

Erie Insurance Group, based in Erie, Pennsylvania, is the 12th largest insurer of private passenger automobiles and the 24th largest property/casualty insurer in the United States. Erie Insurance Group includes seven companies operating in the United States and District of Columbia.