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## Pedestrian accidents rise and the elderly are at a higher risk



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A recent traffic accident in North Arlington involving a hit-and-run driver who severely injured an elderly man walking along a sidewalk illustrates the dangers facing pedestrians these days.

We recently looked at crashes involving vehicles hitting pedestrians in five North Texas counties — Dallas, Tarrant, Collin, Denton and Rockwall.

The data shows a 10 percent increase in such accidents between 2009 and 2013 — from 1,097 to 1,205, according to an analysis of Texas Department of Transportation data by *The Dallas Morning News*.

The biggest percentage increase in vehicle accidents involving pedestrians occurred last year in Dallas, Denton and Tarrant counties, which saw increases of 12 percent, 81 percent and 8 percent respectively over 2012.

Pedestrian fatalities in the five-county area rose sharply over the past five years — from 63 deaths in 2009 to 83 deaths in 2013, a 32 percent increase. Dallas accounted for the majority of these fatalities — 52 deaths in 2013 — a jump of almost 68 percent over 2009, according to our analysis.

Two weeks ago, Terry Pinkston, 73, was hit while walking in the 2400 block of Ascension Boulevard in North Arlington. A suspect in the hit-and-run crash was arrested five days later at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. He was attempting to flee the country.

Elderly pedestrians are killed in traffic accidents at a much higher rate than younger people, according to a recent government report.

The national analysis of data between 2001 and 2010 showed that death rates for men 75 years or older were more than double those of people under 35, according to the report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Death rates for women pedestrians 75 and older were more than double those of all pedestrians under 65.

With the aging of the U.S. population, that trend will likely continue, according to CDC experts.

Approximately 4,000 pedestrians die from crash-related injuries each year in the United States— about 13 percent of all traffic-related deaths in the United States.

The plight of pedestrians can be improved by creating more walkable communities that help people stay active as they grow older, said Patrick Kennedy, an urban planner who lives in Dallas and blogs on this topic at <http://www.carfreeinbigd.com>.

One way to do that is to slow traffic down — especially in densely trafficked areas, such as downtown, Kennedy said. That's done by creating more four-way stops. The slower cars are moving, the safer it is for pedestrians.

"Cars will always drive as fast as the drivers feel comfortable," Kennedy said.

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