

# Highway crossover fatalities drop by half with new median barriers

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**The Associated Press**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Median barriers have cut Alabama's fatality rate for crossover wrecks by about 50 percent over the past two years, according to the state Department of Transportation.

Transportation officials have erected 52 miles of median barriers across Alabama at a cost of \$14 million since 2003. Forty-nine people died in highway crossover wrecks that year. Twenty-four people died in crossover wrecks last year.

DOT spokesman Tony Harris said crossover crashes, which occur when a vehicle crosses the median and winds up in the opposing lane of traffic, are about three times more severe than other interstate crashes.

Harris said common causes are tire failure, hydroplaning and drivers not paying attention to the road.

DOT has identified 15 sections of roads where a high number of crossover wrecks occur. About 30 miles of interstate in Jefferson, Lee, Montgomery, Cullman and Macon counties and U.S. 280 in Shelby County are hot spots. The department will install barriers on I-65 from Gardendale to Warrior and on U.S. 280 on the east side of Double Oak Mountain this summer.

I-59 between mile markers 133 and 136 in Birmingham and I-65 in Cullman County between mile markers 306 and 313 were added to the hot spots list last week.

Montgomery basketball Coach Tim Miller told the Birmingham News that an interstate median barrier could have saved him from three broken ribs and 20 stitches in his head, which he suffered in a wreck last spring.

Miller, who coaches at Jefferson Davis High School, and his assistant coach were going to Biloxi to a coaches conference on Interstate 10. As they approached the Theodore exit, a car in front of them lost control and crossed the interstate median. A sport utility vehicle coming from the opposite direction swerved to miss the out-of-control car.

The sport utility vehicle crossed the median and T-boned Miller's car in the driver's side. The interstate had a median barrier made of cable which ended near the scene of Miller's wreck.

"If the cable had been where the accident happened, it would not have happened," Miller said.

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Information from: The Birmingham News