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Milwaukee City Attorney Holds the Line on Reckless Driving, Delivering Convictions and Accountability for Dangerous Drivers

Coordinated enforcement policy with police and district attorney achieves 84% conviction rate on actively litigated original reckless driving charges in 2025, up from 15% in 2023

MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee City Attorney Evan Goyke announced Wednesday that the office’s coordinated reckless driving enforcement policy announced in October 2024 has dramatically improved prosecution outcomes of first offense reckless driving in Milwaukee Municipal Court. Since the policy took effect, conviction rates on actively litigated first offense reckless driving charges have risen from 15 percent in 2023 to 84 percent in 2025, while the practice of reducing reckless driving charges to lesser offenses has dropped from 65 percent in 2023 to zero. Over the same period, traffic fatalities in Milwaukee have declined from 74 in 2023 to 55 in 2025.

"When I took office, I made a commitment that the City Attorney's Office would be a more effective prosecutor of reckless driving. These numbers are the proof," said Goyke. "We stopped plea bargaining reckless driving charges. We are taking cases to trial. We are achieving convictions. And now repeat reckless drivers in Milwaukee know that a second offense can mean criminal prosecution. That is a real consequence, and it is working."

In 2023, prior to the new policy, 65 percent of actively litigated reckless driving cases in Milwaukee Municipal Court ended in a reduced or amended charge. Only 15 percent resulted in a conviction on the original reckless driving charge. Repeat offenders faced limited consequences because penalty enhancements required prior convictions, not just prior citations. In 2023, the Wisconsin Legislature amended Wis. Stat. § 346.65 to create criminal penalties for second and subsequent reckless driving violations, including fines up to \$1,000 and up to one year in county jail, with no lookback window limiting prior offenses.

In October 2024, the City Attorney's Office formalized a coordinated enforcement agreement with the Milwaukee Police Department and the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office. Under the agreement, MPD issues citations for all provable reckless driving behavior, the City Attorney's Office does not reduce or dismiss charges on provable cases, and the District Attorney's Office takes on second and subsequent offenses as criminal matters under the amended statute.

The City Attorney's Office also invested in training, working with MPD officers on the evidentiary standards required to make reckless driving cases provable in court, and ensuring every reckless driving case receives enhanced review before prosecution. Reckless driving under Wisconsin law requires proof that a driver operated a vehicle in a manner constituting criminal negligence that endangered the safety of a person or property. The heightened standard is what makes conviction data a meaningful measure of prosecutorial commitment.

"This remarkable progress doesn't happen without the prosecutors and staff working in Milwaukee Municipal Courts every day to hold those cited with reckless driving accountable. It doesn't happen without the partnership of the Milwaukee Police Department or the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office," Goyke said. "Reckless driving is a complex problem. Road design matters. Education matters. Community investment matters. But enforcement and prosecution are the piece of this puzzle that belongs to us, and we are committed to doing that piece at the highest level."

Traffic fatalities in Milwaukee have declined significantly over the past several years from 74 deaths in 2023 to 55 in 2025, with just 7 recorded through the end of March 2026. The decline coincides with the City Attorney's coordinated enforcement policy and Mayor Cavalier Johnson's broader Vision Zero Initiative, which brings together enforcement, road design, engineering, and public education in a citywide effort to eliminate traffic deaths on Milwaukee streets.

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About the Office of the City Attorney

The Office of the City Attorney serves as legal counsel and litigation representative for the City of Milwaukee, providing legal guidance to City departments and officials acting in their official capacities. The office supports lawful, ethical, and effective city government in service to the public interest. Established in 1846, the office has represented the City at every level of the American legal system, from Milwaukee Municipal Court to the Supreme Court of the United States.