



## Chapter 4: Emphasis Areas Overview & Approach

## Introduction

Colorado's Emphasis Areas, based on the Safe System Approach, include Safe Driving, Safe People, Safe Roads, Safety Culture, and Post-Crash Care. Subsequent chapters describe strategies to improve the priority Focus Areas in each Emphasis Area. General descriptions of these strategies for each Emphasis Area are described below.

- » **Safety Culture:** focuses on strategies to grow safety culture in organizations and among the general public to support safer practices and behaviors.
- » **Safe Driving:** focuses on strategies that influence safer driver behaviors and address key issues like impaired driving, distracted driving, aggressive driving, speeding, and occupant protection.
- » **Safe People:** focuses on protecting Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs), which include pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, first responders, and roadway crews in work zones.
- » **Safe Roads:** identifies and implements noteworthy practices to improve the built environment with leading edge infrastructure and designs that facilitate safe trips for all modes and all roadway users.
- » **Post-Crash Care:** identifies strategies to increase survivability of crashes through timely emergency response, improved access to emergency medical care, safer conditions for first responders, and improved Traffic Incident Management (TIM) practices.

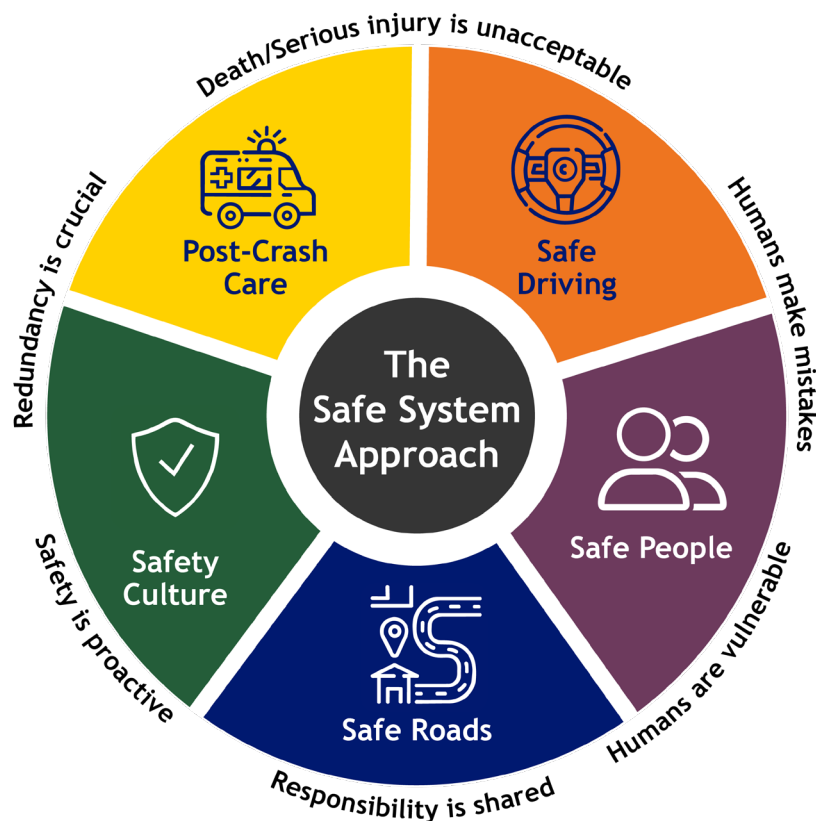


Figure 4-1: The Colorado Safe System Approach

## Emphasis Area Approach

The five Emphasis Areas include 20 Focus Areas described in Chapters 5 through 9 and five additional Focus Areas (see below for further details on: Double Down on Success Focus Areas).

Data analysis and stakeholder feedback from Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) were used to identify Focus Areas that had the highest potential to improve safety. Each Emphasis Area includes Focus Areas that comprise a large portion of fatalities and serious injuries. Guided by these Focus Areas, SMEs and the Steering Committee developed strategies to guide safety improvements.

Grouped by their respective Emphasis Areas, the 20 key Focus Areas are listed below:



### Safety Culture

- » Organizational
- » Public



### Safe Driving

- » Occupant Protection
- » Impairment
- » Aggression
- » Speeding
- » Distraction



### Safe People

- » Motorcyclists
- » Aging Drivers
- » Young Drivers
- » Pedestrians
- » Bicyclists
- » Work Zones
- » First Responders



### Safe Roads

- » Lane Departures
- » Off-System
- » Intersections
- » Speed Management



### Post-Crash Care

- » Traffic Incident Management
- » Emergency Medical Services

## Double Down on Success Focus Areas

Five (5) of the SHSP's Focus Areas (Vehicle Wildlife, Commercial Vehicles, Children Passenger Safety (Under 15), Winter Weather Related, and Highway-Rail Grade Crossings) currently have robust programs and policies in place to address crashes resulting in fatalities and serious injuries. These Focus Areas are already experiencing stable or improved crash outcomes. Safety improvement actions currently underway within these focus areas will continue to be supported through SHSP implementation.







Wildlife-  
Vehicle  
Collisions



Commercial  
Vehicles



Children  
Passenger  
Safety  
(under 15)



Winter Weather  
Related



Highway-  
Rail Grade  
Crossings



**Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions** Wildlife on roadways pose danger to drivers and wildlife alike. There were 132 fatal and serious injury wildlife-related crashes from 2019 to 2023 which is less than 1% of the total fatal and serious injury crashes during that time period. Countermeasures like installation of wildlife fencing, roadside animal detection systems, and wildlife overpasses can mitigate these crashes.



**Commercial Vehicles** Safe travel for commercial motor vehicles (CMV) throughout the state ensures both the health and wellbeing of roadway users, as well as the efficient operation of the freight network. Between 2021 and 2023, crashes involving CMVs made up 3% of the total fatal and serious injury crashes. The Colorado Freight Plan (2024) identifies nine safety-focused strategies that will continue to support CMV safety which includes strategies to enhance truck parking, rail safety, safety data, and communication efforts.



**Children Passenger Safety (Under 15)** Parents and caregivers are responsible for properly restraining children and may be ticketed if they fail to do so. In January 2025, the state updated Colorado's child passenger safety law to reflect the latest research-based recommendations on car seat, booster seat, and seat belt use for children. Resources are available to parents and caregivers including free car seat checks, inspection stations, and car seat fit recommendations.



**Winter Weather Related** Driving in Colorado winter weather can be dangerous if drivers are not prepared for unexpected conditions. From 2019 to 2023, winter weather-related crashes contributed to 4% of total fatal and serious injury crashes. Colorado employs various measures to increase winter weather driving safety including snow removal, avalanche control, traction and chain law enforcement, and various education and communication programs to promote safe driving behaviors.



**Highway-Rail Grade Crossings** The Colorado Public Utility Commission is responsible for safety at over 3,000 highway-rail grade crossings through education, enforcement, and engineering solutions. According to Federal Railroad Administration data, 14 fatalities occurred at Colorado highway-rail grade crossings from 2020 to 2024. Twelve (12) of these 14 fatalities occurred at public crossings, and 6 of the 14 fatalities involved motor vehicles at public crossings.

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Winter weather and wildlife can catch unsuspecting drivers off guard, especially out-of-state drivers such as commercial vehicle drivers. While winter weather and commercial vehicles did not rise to the top in terms of related fatalities and serious injuries, these were noted as concerns during the stakeholder engagement and Colorado will continue efforts to address these concerns.

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## Emphasis Area Roadmap

Each Emphasis Area and its associated Focus Areas and strategies are detailed in Chapters 5 through 9. Stakeholders can use the Emphasis Area chapters to better understand the Emphasis Area, the Focus Areas, and their associated crash characteristics, trends, and strategies for improvement. Below is a roadmap that summarizes what is included in each Emphasis Area chapter.

- » **Introduction to the Emphasis Area and Focus Areas:** Describes the Emphasis Area and how it relates to the included Focus Areas.
- » **Focus Area Definition:** Defines the crash type.
- » **Focus Area Goal:** Defines a goal to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.
- » **Focus Area Data Analysis:** Illustrates crash data analysis of the total fatalities and serious injuries from 2017 to 2023 compared to all crashes for each Focus Area. Due to Colorado's crash report form change in 2020, some Focus Areas only have data available from 2021 to 2023. This analysis also highlights the counties across Colorado with the highest number and per capita rate of fatal and serious injuries for that Focus Area. Unless otherwise noted, data that was utilized in the focus area analysis was sourced from Colorado's Statewide Crash Listings.<sup>1</sup>
- » **Focus Area Strategies:** Lists the strategies with a brief description and how the strategy will improve safety.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.codot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/data-analysis/crash-data>