



## **EMBARGOED MIDNIGHT FRIDAY 27 MARCH 2020**

### **RSA, Gardaí and Irish Association for Emergency Medicine urge road users to answer Ireland's call and stay safe on the roads**

- Numbers killed on Irish roads up 24% vs 2019
- Nine road fatalities in six-day period in March
- Consultant in Emergency Medicine expresses concern at added pressure on hospitals from crashes

Friday 26 March 2020: The Road Safety Authority (RSA), An Garda Síochána and the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine have expressed concern at the significant increase in the number of road deaths over the last two months\*. To date in 2020, 47 people have died on Irish roads, an increase of 24% on the same period last year. Over the 6 days from 17 March to 22 March, 9 people alone were killed on Irish roads.

The three organisations have come together to remind road users of the ever-present dangers on Irish roads and have called on road users to act responsibly and safely. Concerns about the increase in road collisions have also been raised by healthcare professionals, worried about the additional pressure road crashes will place on first responders and Emergency Department staff who need to focus on dealing with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr. Shane Ross said: "It is desperately sad that already in 2020 so many lives have been lost and families traumatised by entirely preventable road collisions. This is unforgivable. We are in an emergency currently with the COVID-19 pandemic: A health care crisis that requires all the resources of government, the health service and our first responders. We cannot afford to put any more pressure on our hospitals and healthcare professionals at this time. Just as it is our national duty to tackle the pandemic, it is also our national duty to stay safe, keep others safe on the roads and not add to the workload of our health care system. Don't be selfish. Don't drink or take drugs and drive. Keep within the speed limits, wear a seat belt and don't even think of using your phone while driving."

Ms. Liz O'Donnell, Chairperson, Road Safety Authority said: "It has been a shocking start to 2020. Road deaths have increased by 24% and it's a trend we don't want to see happening at any time. The roads might be quieter than normal but there are more vulnerable road users out and about. So, it has never been more important to practice good road safety habits. This is not a time for making unnecessary journeys, it is a time for taking extra care in everything we do. I understand that people need to exercise by going for a walk or cycle, but not only do we need to do it responsibly taking the government's health advice into account, we need to do it safely. I am asking road users to make a special effort to take greater responsibility. Drivers in particular need to slow down, put away your mobile phone and look out for vulnerable road users."

Dr. Fergal Hickey of the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine (IAEM) said: "Colleagues working in Emergency Medicine and myself are alarmed at the level of irresponsible road user



behaviour we have witnessed recently. As someone on the frontline of the health service, I know that hospitals are about to be put under extreme pressure responding to COVID-19, the like of which has never been experienced before. If the current trends in road collisions continues it will place extra demands on our healthcare professionals. Every crash diverts ambulance crews and adds to the workload of already under pressure Emergency Departments. I'm asking people to have consideration for our emergency services by having greater respect for each other on the road. We all need to take responsibility for our actions when using the road."

Assistant Commissioner Dave Sheehan, Roads Policing Unit, said that "An Garda Síochána has been building up its manpower and resources to respond to the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 health crisis. While I can assure you that the members of our Roads Policing Units nationwide will continue to enforce our life saving road safety laws, what we really need right now is for people to understand that every collision caused by irresponsible road behaviour distracts from the national effort to respond to Covid-19 related community needs. I want to echo my colleagues on the front line in our health services and appeal to all road users to take greater responsibility when using the roads, now and in the future. By doing so we can save lives and assist in the current public national health effort."

**ENDS**

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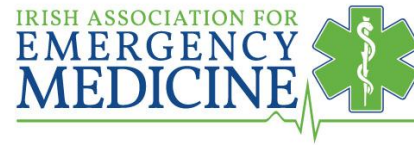
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\*As of 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020, there have been 47 fatalities on Irish roads, nine more than for the same period in 2019. There were 14 pedestrians, 20 drivers, eight passengers, four motorcyclists and one cyclist killed to date on Irish roads. The monthly average for 2020 stands at 16 deaths per month, compared to 12 per month for both 2019 and 2018. Nine deaths were recorded in January, 20 in February and 18 to date in March 2020.

Breakdown of fatalities in 2020 by road user type:

Road User Type	TOT
Driver	20
Passenger	8



<b>Pedestrian</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Motorcyclist</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Pedal Cyclist</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>