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About the data

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Minnesota law has required all law enforcement agencies to report motor vehicle pursuits to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension since 1989.

The Pioneer Press requested data about police pursuits and received information about 6,896 pursuits between 2004 and 2010.

The newspaper found problems with the database on four chases, three of which had been covered by the media. In an effort to determine if there were more problems, the Pioneer Press reviewed a random sample of 14 metro-area cases that resulted in deaths or injuries, out of 61 such cases, but found no further errors.

The problems the newspaper identified occurred in various ways:

- Two high-profile cases, including the one that injured Mary Plaster and Dan Sanford, were not in the BCA data.
- In the Plaster/Sanford case, St. Paul police said they sent the Minnesota Pursuit Report Form to the BCA, but the agency said it didn't receive the form.
- In a fatal Minneapolis case, a police spokesman said not turning in the form was an oversight and that they would be doing so now.
- One St. Paul case was marked as fatal, but no one was injured. A sergeant used the wrong code to describe the injury, a police spokesman said.
- A Minnesota State Patrol case was recorded as unknown injury, though the driver had died on the scene. The injury type was blank when the BCA received the form, and they marked it as unknown, said Jill Oliveira, BCA spokeswoman. That question on the form was apparently overlooked,

a State Patrol spokesman said.

It is the responsibility of law enforcement to provide

accurate information, and the BCA cannot verify all of it, Oliveira said.

The BCA also has no mechanism to identify if agencies aren't sending in pursuit forms, she said.

State law requires police to submit the forms in 30 days, but it gives the BCA no authority to enforce the law, nor does it provide penalties, said Dana Gotz, acting executive director of the BCA's Minnesota Justice Information Services.

The pursuit information the BCA gathers is included in an annual report on Minnesota crime.



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