

Media Release

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## **RESEARCH AIMS TO DOCUMENT AND REDUCE VEHICLE COLLISIONS WITH WILDLIFE**

A group of researchers from the University of Northern British Columbia has been instrumental in developing and implementing a high-tech tool that will provide new information in efforts to reduce vehicle collisions with wildlife.

Mobile GPS units have been outfitted with buttons that allow users to select when moose or deer are seen along roads, either alive or dead. Precise information about the time of day, date, and location are stored in the unit and downloaded to a computer for further analysis and mapping. Ten of the units have already been distributed to local truck drivers, who have been recording data along highways heading out of Prince George to the north, south, east, and west since July. Researchers are hoping to continue working with the local trucking companies to collect data until the summer of 2007.

“This is the first time we’ve ever had really accurate data on where animals are being spotted and where either collisions have occurred or are likely to occur,” says UNBC researcher Roy Rea. “We’ve analyzed 10 years of ICBC claims data and information from the Ministry’s Wildlife Accident Reporting System but these two sources must be combined with more current and site-specific information so that countermeasures for collision hotspots can be developed. When we add the GPS data, we’re able to more precisely predict where animals are likely to be, both at different times of year as well as at different times of day.”

ICBC has identified October as Zero Crash Month. Last year, in the month of October alone, there were 510 wildlife collisions in Northern BC – the highest number in four years. In fact, close to 30% of all collisions around Northern BC during October involve wildlife. On an annual basis for the entire province, the average numbers (over the last five years) are significant:

- Close to 10,000 animal-related collisions per year, worth about \$23 million in claims.
- The collisions are responsible for an average of 316 injuries and four fatalities per year.

“Despite our attempts to reduce collisions with wildlife, we continue to see a high frequency of these crashes,” says David Dickson of ICBC. “Our relationship with UNBC researchers has been providing us with valuable information that will enable us to focus our efforts in implementing measures that will hopefully reduce the number of these collisions.”

The research is being funded by ICBC, with support from Autoplan brokers and the RoadHealth Task Force. Others involved include Lomak Bulk Carriers, Excel Transportation, Grandview Transport, the Vanderhoof ambulance service and fire department, Yellowhead Road and Bridge, the RCMP, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways, and the Wildlife Collision Prevention Program.

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### **Contact**

Roy Rea, Ecosystem Science and Management program, UNBC – 250.960.5833  
Rob van Adrichem, Director of Media and Public Relations, UNBC - 250.960.5622  
[www.unbc.ca/releases](http://www.unbc.ca/releases)