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Fury road

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Highlights

Airport Road deadliest stretch with 405 accidents recorded between 2020 and 2022, as per BTP data
Engineering, education, enforcement (3Es) critical

By Garima Prasher

For the third year in a row the Airport Road continues to be the most dangerous in the city, according to Bengaluru Traffic Police's road accident records.

As per the official data, Yelahanka zone recorded the highest number of accidents since 2020. The station clocked as many as 405 accidents between 2020 and March 2022. Following closely was Chikkajala with 395 accidents, yet another stretch that leads to the airport.

Officials and transport experts are of the view that the majority of the accidents in Yelahanka zone can be attributed to the roads leading to Kempegowda International Airport.

Overspeeding vehicles, taxis in a mindless rush, complete disregard for traffic rules and youths at the wheel in an inebriated condition are a few of the reckless driving scenarios one can witness on these stretches.

“The number of road accidents has surely been high in Yelahanka limits. The majority of these accidents take place on the Airport Road. Vehicles on these stretches ignore traffic rules and almost all are overspeeding.

In most cases, four-wheelers are the accused, and two-wheelers and pedestrians are victims,” said a traffic police officer from Yelahanka station.

Road safety and infrastructure experts noted that in order to pinpoint the specific reasons leading to crashes, accident-prone stretches should be brought under the scanner.

“Road accidents are complex phenomena with several factors at play. The high number of accidents in Yelahanka traffic

limits can be due to the Airport Road leading to Devanahalli.

While reckless driving is a major aspect, there can be other elements to look at as well. To pinpoint specific reasons, in-depth studies should be conducted in accident-prone areas,” said Dr Ashish Verma of the Sustainable Transportation Lab at IISc.

Stations	2020	2021	2022	Total
Yelahanka	195	172	38	405
Chikkajala	182	189	24	395
Kamakshipalya	159	157	22	338
K Swamy layout	159	140	37	336
Electronic City	155	129	19	303

The 3Es

While Yelahanka zone tops the chart, Kamakshipalya saw 338 accidents, Kumaraswamy Layout recorded 336 and Electronics City witnessed 303 crashes, following not too far behind.

As per data, the total number of road accident cases in Bengaluru has not come down considerably. While 3,236 cases were recorded in 2020, the number improved only slightly with 3,211 cases in 2021. However, by March this year, there have already been 539 instances of road accidents.

While traffic police officials blame the high number of accident cases on rash driving and negligence of traffic rules, experts attributed erroneous road geometry, disregard for engineering aspects and lack of proper enforcement as other reasons behind the high numbers.

As per road safety experts, engineering, education and enforcement (3Es) are the most important aspects to rein in road accidents. There is growing awareness about the improvement of road geometry and engineering aspects, especially in the case of highways. Though the situation has slightly improved with signages and road markings, road safety audits are missing in urban areas.

According to specialists, road safety audits should be integrated into the system and engineering standards should be strictly adhered to.

For instance, Yeshwantpur and Shivananda Circle flyovers, experts said, are classic examples of dangerous geometry that can lead to fatal accidents.

“There have been multiple accidents on Yeshwantpur Flyover whereby trucks have fallen after colliding with the sidewall. Interestingly, this flyover has a very unique and dangerous geometry. The approach road to this flyover has a downslope,

which means vehicles are already speeding up when they are approaching the flyover.

Once the vehicles are on the flyover, there is a sharp turn which is more than 90 degrees. This peculiar feature makes the situation very risky and creates a dangerous blackspot. Likewise, the Shivananda Circle Flyover has a sharp gradient of 6.6%. As per safety standards, such gradients can exist only in exceptional circumstances, that too on highways. Slopes of flyovers in urban spaces should not have a gradient higher than 3-3.5%. This is a major aspect of engineering that we ignore," said Dr Verma.

Experts stressed the need for a rethink of the Motor Vehicle Act which they said is the need of the hour.

Slopes of flyovers should not have a gradient higher than 3-3.5%, an engineering aspect that we ignore.

— Dr Ashish Verma, IISc

"There have hardly been any reforms with the driver's licence process. Currently, a learner's licence can be upgraded to a driver's licence and education is not mandatory. Moreover, prospective drivers are not tested on several physical parameters, especially vision-related. The Motor Vehicle Act only talks about self-declaration of health to get a licence for a personal vehicle. The psychology and driving attitude of prospective drivers should be considered as many of these accidents involve early drivers," added Dr Verma.

The lack of law enforcement is another reason behind the high number of accidents. While penalties have been increased, implementation and enforcement are missing or riddled with corruption. Experts noted that authorities should use tech to ensure corruption-free enforcement of traffic laws.