

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces Further Decreases in Roadway Fatalities

Fatalities are down for the second straight year

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The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration today released highway crash fatality data for 2018, showing a 2.4 percent decline in overall fatalities, the second consecutive year of reduced crash fatalities. Under this Administration and Secretary Chao's leadership, the USDOT has focused on safety as its top priority.

"This is encouraging news, but still far too many perished or were injured, and nearly all crashes are preventable, so much more work remains to be done to make America's roads safer for everyone," U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao said.

The data, compiled by NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System, shows that highway fatalities decreased in 2018 with 913 fewer fatalities, down to 36,560 people from 37,473 people in 2017. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled also decreased by 3.4 percent (from 1.17 in 2017 to 1.13 in 2018), the lowest fatality rate since 2014.

Other findings from the 2018 FARS data include:

- Fatalities among children (14 and younger) declined 10.3 percent;
- Alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities declined 3.6 percent;
- Speeding-related fatalities declined 5.7 percent; and
- Motorcyclist fatalities declined 4.7 percent.

"New vehicles are safer than older ones and when crashes occur, more new vehicles are equipped with advanced technologies that prevent or reduce the severity of crashes," NHTSA Acting Administrator James Owens said. "NHTSA has spent recent years partnering with state and local governments and safety advocates to urge the public to never drive impaired or distracted, to avoid excessive speed, and to always buckle up."

In addition to the 2018 numbers, NHTSA also released initial estimates for the first half of 2019, which suggest that this overall positive trend may be continuing.

The estimated number of fatalities in the first half of 2019 declined by 3.4 percent from the same period in 2018, with 589 fewer fatalities over that time. That translates to an estimated first-half 2019 fatality rate of 1.06, the lowest first-half level since 2015. The estimates for the second quarter of 2019 represent the seventh-consecutive year-over-year quarterly decline in fatalities, starting in the last quarter of 2017.

NHTSA is identifying opportunities to leverage its resources and collaborate with modal partners within USDOT to reduce fatalities among pedestrians and pedalcyclists (bicyclists and riders of two-wheel, nonmotorized vehicles, tricycles, and unicycles powered solely by pedals), among whom 2018 fatalities

unfortunately increased by 3.4 percent (to 6,283) and 6.3 percent (to 857), respectively. According to the FARS data:

- Pedestrian fatalities occurred overwhelmingly after dark (76 percent), when many pedestrians had some alcohol in their systems (38 percent), and were not at intersections (74 percent; i.e., crossing in the middle of a street or road).
- Pedalcyclist fatalities often occurred after dark (50 percent of the time), with some alcohol in their systems (26 percent), and outside of intersections (60 percent).

To address these numbers:

- NHTSA is examining current and planned research related to these vulnerable road users, including recently announced plans for upgrades to the New Car Assessment Program – the 5-Star Ratings system for new vehicles. As part of these NCAP upgrades, NHTSA will consider new technologies tied to the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, among other vulnerable road users.
- The Federal Highway Administration is working to reduce fatalities with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, which promotes safe, comfortable, and convenient walking and bicycling for people of all ages and abilities.
- FHWA also is focused on pedestrian and bicycle transportation through funding, policy guidance, program management, and resource development, and the availability of an FHWA Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator point of contact in each of its division offices.

The 2018 FARS release also clarifies previously released data on large trucks involved in fatal crashes. NHTSA reexamined supporting material and reclassified several light pickup trucks to an appropriate large truck category. As a result, the 9 percent increase in large-truck-related fatalities reported for 2017 has been revised to 4.9 percent. For 2018, large-truck related fatalities increased by 0.9 percent. The details of the scope of the changes are documented in the 2018 fatal motor vehicle crashes overview research note.

With this release, NHTSA also introduced its new Fatality and Injury Reporting System Tool (FIRST), a modernized crash query tool that lets users not only query fatal crash data but also generate estimates of crashes and people injured in crashes. The upgraded functionalities in the new tool include generating multi-year trends, estimates of alcohol involvement, and charting/tabulation/mapping of query results. The tool, along with instructions on its usage, can be accessed [here](#).

[Click here](#) to view the 2018 fatal motor vehicle crashes overview research note. [Click here](#) to view the 2019 six-month estimate data.

Contact:

NHTSA

NHTSA Media NHTSAmmedia@dot.gov 202-366-9550