

NHTSA Releases 2019 Crash Fatality Data

2019 Showed Significant Improvements in Traffic Safety, Including the Lowest Percentage of Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities on Record

December 18, 2020 | Washington, DC

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration today released its annual [2019 traffic fatality data](#) from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS).

Traffic deaths decreased nationwide during 2019 as compared to 2018, and alcohol-impaired driving fatalities decreased to the lowest percentage since 1982, when NHTSA started reporting alcohol data.

There were 36,096 fatalities in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2019. This represents a decrease of 739 (down 2%) from the reported 36,835 fatalities in 2018, even though vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased by 0.8%. As a result, the fatality rate for 2019 was 1.10 fatalities per 100 million VMT – the lowest rate since 2014, and down from 1.14 fatalities per 100 million VMT in 2018.

Fatalities decreased in most major traffic safety categories in 2019 compared to 2018, including:

- Passenger vehicle occupant fatalities (630 fewer fatalities, 2.8% decrease)
- Pedestrian fatalities (169 fewer fatalities, 2.7% decrease)
- Pedalcyclist fatalities (25 fewer fatalities, 2.9% decrease)
- Alcohol-impaired driving fatalities (568 fewer fatalities, 5.3% decrease)
- Urban fatalities (813 fewer fatalities, 4% decrease)

"We are encouraged by the 2019 FARS data, which shows that fewer lives were lost on our nation's roads than the year before, a trend for three years now even while economic growth was increasing," said NHTSA Deputy Administrator James Owens. "We saw notable reductions in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities, as well as fewer lives lost in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. If we're to keep building on these numbers, everyone needs to do their part by driving sober, wearing their seat belts, avoiding speeding and distractions, and sharing the road with pedestrians and cyclists."

The 2019 fatality data comes in the context of increased risky driving behaviors during the 2020 public health emergency. Today, NHTSA issued a special supplementary report for the first half of 2020 on monthly traffic fatalities and [fatality rates by various subcategories](#) such as age, land use, and roadway function class, as compared to 2019. While the number of traffic fatalities during April to June 2020 were projected to decrease, there is a projected increase in the proportion of fatalities that occurred in rural areas, among younger people 16 to 24 years old, with risky drivers, in rollovers and ejections, and among occupants of older vehicles (10+ years). The elevated total fatality rate is strongly driven by the higher fatality rates on rural local/collector, arterial, and interstate roadways during the first half of 2020.

The Overview of Motor Vehicle Crashes in 2019 also includes injury and property-damage-only crash estimates from the 2019 Crash Report Sampling System on all police-reported crashes.

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