

NHTSA Releases Q1 2021 Fatality Estimates, New Edition of 'Countermeasures That Work'

Guide to help local highway safety professionals improve safety

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The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration today released the [Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities for the First Quarter of 2021](#). NHTSA estimates that 8,730 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in the first three months of 2021, a 10.5% increase from the 7,900 fatalities the agency projected for the first quarter of 2020.

These increases in fatalities come even as driving declined; preliminary data reported by the Federal Highway Administration show that vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the first three months of 2021 decreased by 2.1%, or about 14.9 billion miles. The fatality rates per 100 million VMT for the first quarter of 2021 increased to 1.26 fatalities per 100 million VMT, up from the projected rate of 1.12 fatalities in the same time last year.

"We must address the tragic loss of life we saw on the roads in 2020 by taking a transformational and collaborative approach to safety. Everyone – including those who design, operate, build and use the road system – shares responsibility for road safety," said Dr. Steven Cliff, NHTSA's Acting Administrator. "We are working closely with our safety partners to address risky driving behaviors such as speeding, impaired driving, and failing to buckle up."

These early estimates suggest the driving patterns and behaviors the agency reported in 2020, which changed significantly from previous years, continue to prevail and that drivers who remained on the roads engaged in more risky behavior, including speeding, failing to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

To assist stakeholders in evaluating the trends and identifying countermeasures, NHTSA today also released the 10th edition of *Countermeasures That Work*. This report supports a proactive, equitable safe system approach to eliminating fatalities on our nation's roads, and addresses the safety of all road users, including those who walk, bike and drive.

"This tool includes information on strategies that can help prevent destructive behaviors like impaired driving, or encourage positive habits like wearing a seat belt," Dr. Cliff said.

The 10 program areas covered in this edition of [Countermeasures That Work](#) are alcohol- and drug-impaired driving, bicycle safety, distracted driving, drowsy driving, motorcycle safety, older drivers, pedestrian safety, seat belts and child restraints, speeding and speed management, and young drivers. The report includes a look at how each issue impacts our society, and proven strategies for communities to consider in addressing these specific concerns.

A two-page [Traffic Tech](#) highlights this version's additions, including new countermeasures and expanded issue areas. NHTSA will also publish easy-to-use reference sheets on each of the 10 issues highlighted in *Countermeasures That Work*, which will help communities learn about and implement the most effective strategies.

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