

Motor Vehicle Deaths Estimated to be Highest in Nine Years

Cost of 2016 Motor Vehicle Deaths, Injuries & Property Damage Was \$432.5B

ITASCA, ILL. & WASHINGTON, D.C. — For the first time in nearly a decade, preliminary data from the National Safety Council (NSC) estimates that 40,000 people may have died in motor vehicle crashes in 2016. It marks a 6% increase over 2015, and a 14% increase over 2014, making it the most dramatic two-year escalation in more than 50 years.

If the preliminary estimate holds true, it means 2016 was the deadliest year on the nation's roads since 2007. An estimated 4.6 million roadway users were injured seriously enough to require medical attention in 2016, up 7% from 2015.

The estimated cost of motor vehicle deaths, injuries and property damage was \$432.5 billion, according to NSC, an increase of 12% from 2015. The cost includes wage and productivity losses, medical and administrative expenses, employer costs and property damage.

“Our complacency is killing us. Americans believe there is nothing we can do to stop crashes from happening, but that isn't true,” said NSC President and CEO Deborah A.P. Hersman. “The U.S. lags the rest of the developed

world in addressing highway fatalities. We know what needs to be done; we just haven't done it.”

The survey offered a glimpse at the risky behaviors drivers are exhibiting. Although 83% of drivers surveyed believed driving is a safety concern, an alarming number said they are comfortable speeding (64%), texting either manually or through voice controls (47%), driving while impaired by marijuana (13%) or driving after they feel they have had too much alcohol (10%).

Motor vehicle fatality estimates are subject to slight increases and decreases as data mature. NSC uses data from the National Center for Health Statistics, an arm of the Centers for Disease Control. Deaths occurring within 100 days of the crash and on both public and private roadways — such as parking lots and driveways — are included in its estimates.

With the upward trend of motor vehicle fatalities showing no sign of reversing, NSC has called for the implementation of measures that could set the nation on a “road to zero” deaths:

- Mandate ignition interlocks for

convicted drunk drivers and better education about the nature of impairment and when it begins.

- Install and use automated enforcement techniques to catch speeders.
- Extend laws banning all cell phone use, including hands-free, to all drivers, not just teenagers; upgrade enforcement from secondary to primary in states with existing bans.
- Upgrade seat belt laws from secondary to primary enforcement and extend restraint laws to every passenger in every seating position in all kinds of vehicles.
- Adopt a three-tiered licensing system for all new drivers under 21 — not just those under 18.
- Standardize and accelerate into the fleet automotive safety technologies with life-saving potential, including blind-spot monitoring, automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning and adaptive headlights.
- Pass or reinstate motorcycle helmet laws.

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- Adopt comprehensive programs for pedestrian safety.

Young Millennials Are Worst Behaved Drivers

On the heels of the NSC report, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that 88% of young millennials engaged in at least one risky behavior while driving in the past 30 days, earning the top spot of worst behaved U.S. drivers. The dangerous behaviors, all of which increase the risk of an accident, included texting while driving, running red lights and speeding.

“Alarming, some of the drivers ages 19–24 believe that their dangerous driving behavior is acceptable,” said Dr. David Yang, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety executive director. “It’s critical that these drivers understand the potentially deadly consequences of engaging in these types of behaviors and that they change their behavior and attitudes in order to reverse the growing number of fatalities on U.S. roads.”

The percentage of drivers who reported engaging in speeding, red light running or texting behind the wheel in the past 30 days include:

1. Drivers ages 19-24: 88.4%
2. Drivers ages 25-39: 79.2%
3. Drivers ages 40-59: 75.2%
4. Drivers ages 16-18: 69.3%
5. Drivers ages 75+: 69.1%
6. Drivers ages 60-74: 67.3%

New England Motor Deaths, Changes and Rates

	2016 Deaths	2015 Deaths	2014 Deaths	% Change 2015 to 2016	% Change 2014 to 2016
Connecticut	307	283	249	8%	23%
Maine	159	156	135	2%	18%
Massachusetts	399	354	348	13%	15%
New Hampshire	137	114	92	20%	49%
Rhode Island	53	45	52	18%	2%
Vermont	64	57	44	12%	45%

Source: National Safety Council

Texting While Driving

Drivers ages 19-24 were 1.6 times as likely as all drivers to report having read a text message or email while driving in the last 30 days (66.1% vs. 40.2%), according to the AAA Foundation. In addition, they were nearly twice as likely as all drivers to report having typed or sent a text message or email while driving (59.3% vs. 31.4%).

Speeding

Drivers ages 19-24 were 1.4 times as likely as all drivers to report having driven 10 mph over the speed limit on a residential street. Nearly 12% of these drivers reported feeling that it is acceptable to drive 10 mph over the speed limit in a school zone, compared to less than 5% of all drivers.

Running Red Lights

Nearly half of drivers ages 19-24 reported driving through a light that had just turned red when they could have stopped safely, compared to 36% of all drivers.

Nearly 14% of drivers ages 19-24 reported feeling that it is acceptable to

drive through a light that just turned red, when they could have stopped safely, compared to about 6% of all drivers.

Methodology

The survey results are part of the AAA Foundation’s annual “Traffic Safety Culture Index,” which identifies attitudes and behaviors related to traffic safety. The survey data are from a sample of 2,511 licensed drivers ages 16 and older who reported driving in the past 30 days. ■

Founded in 1913 and chartered by Congress, NSC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to eliminate preventable deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy.

Established by AAA in 1947, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, publicly-supported charitable educational and research organization. Dedicated to saving lives and reducing injuries on U.S. roads, its mission is to prevent crashes and save lives through research and education about traffic safety.