

NHTSA Estimates Traffic Fatalities Declined in the First Half of 2024

The number of traffic fatalities declined by 3.2 percent compared to the same period in 2023, marking the ninth straight quarter of declines.

In 2022, USDOT adopted a comprehensive road safety plan to bring the number of roadway deaths to the only acceptable number of deaths: zero

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has released its early estimates of traffic fatalities for the first half of 2024, estimating that traffic fatalities declined for the ninth straight quarter. An estimated 18,720 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes, a decrease of about 3.2% as compared to 19,330 fatalities projected to have occurred in the first half of 2023. Fatalities declined in both the first and second quarters of 2024.

Continuing the trend identified in the first quarter estimates released in June, preliminary data reported by the Federal Highway Administration show that vehicle miles traveled in the first half of 2024 increased by about 13.1 billion miles, or roughly 0.8% higher than the same time period last year. More miles driven combined with fewer traffic deaths resulted in a fatality rate of 1.17 fatalities per 100 million VMT, down from the projected rate of 1.21 fatalities per 100 million VMT in the first half of 2023.

“Reversing the rise in roadway deaths has been a top priority for this Department, so we’re encouraged to see continued reductions in traffic fatalities—yet the overall proportions of this issue remain at crisis levels and there is much more work to do,” U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said. “Safety is at the core of our mission, and we are using funds from the Biden-Harris infrastructure package to deliver lifesaving resources to communities across the country so that roads become safer for everyone.”

“We are heartened by this decline in fatalities and are continuing to work hard to get to zero fatalities through our National Roadway Safety Strategy,” Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg said. “This initiative addresses every aspect of this crisis—ensuring that our work results in safer vehicles, safer speeds, safer roads and safer people while also addressing saving lives after crashes.”

“We’re encouraged that after spiking during the pandemic, traffic deaths are coming down,” NHTSA Deputy Administrator Sophie Shulman said. “NHTSA continues to advance traffic safety with all the tools at our disposal, including rulemakings for lifesaving vehicle technologies and increased Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for state highway safety offices.”

NHTSA estimates a decrease in fatalities in 31 states and Puerto Rico. The fatality rate in one state remained unchanged, while 18 states and the District of Columbia are projected to have experienced increases.

Since January 2021, NHTSA finalized a significant number of safety initiatives aimed at reducing traffic deaths, such as a new requirement for passenger cars and light trucks to come equipped with automatic emergency braking systems by 2029. In coordination with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the agency continues to work toward finalizing a similar requirement for heavy vehicles. These initiatives support the Department’s National Roadway Safety Strategy, a comprehensive approach to significantly reducing serious injuries and deaths on our nation’s highways, roads, and streets.

Earlier this year, the Department published its 2024 Progress Report, a departmental update two years after the release of the National Roadway Safety Strategy on January 27, 2022. The Department-wide adoption of the safe system approach remains the foundation of the safety strategy’s implementation and is pivotal to addressing the fatality crisis on our roads. The progress report provides an update on the Department’s efforts to address serious and fatal injuries on our roadways and details the Department’s accomplishments related to addressing actions in 2023.