

Motor-vehicle crash fatalities rose in 2015, preliminary data show

Speeding, impaired driving, lack of restraints were key factors

PHOENIX – The figures remain preliminary, but it's already clear that motor-vehicle crash fatalities on Arizona roadways increased in 2015 – and that speeding, impaired driving and failure to use seat belts and other restraints contributed significantly.

At present, the Arizona Department of Transportation is reporting 891 motor-vehicle crash fatalities for 2015. That number, which is incomplete while ADOT collects reports from law enforcement entities around the state, surpasses the 773 fatalities in motor-vehicle crashes during 2014.

Data through September 2015 show that speeding, impaired driving and failure to use seat belts and other restraints were each factors in more than a third of motor-vehicle crash fatalities.

The increase in fatalities has leaders of state agencies that look after the safety of motorists calling for Arizonans to reflect on how they act in the driver's seat.

"We often talk about the E's of traffic safety, including engineering, education and enforcement," ADOT Director John Halikowski said. "But another E is equally important, and that is everyone. For Arizona to move toward our goal of zero fatalities, everyone must think about their responsibility to others when they get behind the wheel."

ADOT collaborates with stakeholder groups and other agencies, including the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, Arizona Department of Public Safety and Arizona Department of Health Services, to set and work toward goals in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (azdot.gov/shsp), a comprehensive framework for reducing fatalities and serious injuries on all public roadways. Emphasis areas include speeding and aggressive driving, impaired driving, occupant protection and motorcycle safety.

"A significant cause of fatal crashes in Arizona, in addition to impairment and failing to use seat belts, is speed, unsafe lane changes and following too close," said Col. Frank Milstead, director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety. "Aggressive driving is a crime and puts everyone on the road at risk. If you see it, report it."

Alberto Gutier, director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, said it's especially important for drivers to understand how poor decisions can end in tragedy.

"Alcohol is involved in more than a third of the fatal crashes across the state," Gutier said. "Everyone should be aware of just how devastating impaired driving is in this state, and those who put innocent lives at risk by doing so should be prepared to face the consequences."

"It's important to securely buckle up all of your passengers," said Dr. Cara Christ, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. "Creating a healthy environment inside your vehicle includes the use of seat belts and zero distractions. That email or text can wait."

A final number for 2015 fatalities will be available when ADOT publishes its annual [Arizona Motor Vehicle Crash Facts](#) report later this year.

The highest annual number of motor-vehicle crash fatalities in Arizona occurred in 2006, with 1,301 on highways and local roads. In the five years preceding 2015, the toll was 773 in 2014, 844 in 2013, 831 in 2012, 754 in 2011 and 762 in 2010.

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