



# DRIVER SAFETY LETTER



## Remain Ever Vigilant

November 2021

Last month, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released its "Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities for the first Half (January-June) of 2021." The report shows the biggest six-month increase recorded in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System's history. An estimated 20,160 people died in motor vehicle crashes in the first half of 2021, up 18.4% from 2020. That's the largest number of projected fatalities in that time since 2006.

Preliminary data from the Federal Highway Administration show vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the first half of 2021 increased by about 13%. The fatality rate for the first half of 2021 increased to 1.34 fatalities per 100 million VMT, up from the projected rate of 1.28 fatalities per 100 million VMT in the first half of 2020.

These alarming statistics follow preliminary estimates of increases in crash fatalities in 2020. While Americans drove less in 2020 due to the pandemic, NHTSA's early estimates show an estimated 38,680 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes—the largest projected number of fatalities since 2007. This represents an increase of about 7.2% as compared to the 36,096 fatalities reported in 2019.

Preliminary data from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) shows vehicle miles traveled in 2020 decreased by about 430.2 billion miles, or about a 13% decrease. The fatality rate for 2020 was 1.37 fatalities per 100 million VMT, up from 1.11 fatalities per 100 million VMT in 2019. NHTSA's analysis shows that the main behaviors that drove this increase include impaired driving, speeding and failure to wear a seat belt.

In addition to the traffic fatality data, NHTSA also released behavioral research indicating that incidents of speeding and traveling without a seatbelt remain higher than during pre-pandemic times. Crash factors and demographics reviewed by NHTSA showed that the largest increases in 2020 as compared to 2019 included:

- Occupant ejection (up 20%)
- Unrestrained occupants of passenger vehicles (up 15%)
- On urban interstates (up 15%)
- On urban local/collector roads (up 12%)
- In speeding-related crashes (up 11%)
- On rural local/collector roads (up 11%)
- During nighttime (up 11%)
- During the weekend (up 9%)
- In rollover crashes (up 9%)
- In single-vehicle crashes (up 9%) and
- In police-reported alcohol involvement crashes (up 9%)

Among the few categories of highway users that were projected to have decreases in fatalities in 2020 were fatalities resulting from crashes involving a large truck (commercial or non-commercial use). These accidents are projected to decline marginally (down 2%).

The message? Keep up the good work, but recognize the trends and remain ever vigilant about the hazards you face while navigating the nation's roadways. Slow down, wear seat belts, drive sober and avoid distractions behind the wheel. We all must work together to stop aggressive, dangerous driving and prevent fatal crashes.

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*The NPTC Monthly Driver Safety Letter, jointly sponsored by NPTC and [Centerline Drivers](#), is a Microsoft Word document that you can print out and post as is, if appropriate, or modify any way you wish to make it a better fit for your drivers, including adding your company logo. If you are already doing an in-house letter, you may find information here that you can cut and paste into your own letter. If you are interested in specific subjects, or have any comments/feedback, contact Tom Moore, CTP, at [tmoore@nptc.org](mailto:tmoore@nptc.org) or (703)838-8898.*