



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Contact: Olivia Alair
Tel: 202-366-4570

U.S. Transportation Secretary LaHood Announces Lowest Traffic Fatalities in Six Decades *2009 Data Show Major Across-the-Board Declines in all Categories Despite a Slight Increase in Road Travel*

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today released updated 2009 fatality and injury data showing that highway deaths fell to 33,808 for the year, the lowest number since 1950. The record-breaking decline in traffic fatalities occurred even while estimated vehicle miles traveled in 2009 increased by 0.2 percent over 2008 levels.

In addition, 2009 saw the lowest fatality and injury rates ever recorded: 1.13 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2009, compared to 1.26 deaths for 2008.

Fatalities declined in all categories of vehicles including motorcycles, which saw fatalities fall by 850 from 2008, breaking an 11-year cycle of annual increases.

“At the Department of Transportation, we are laser-focused on our top priority: safety,” said Secretary LaHood. “Today’s announcement shows that America’s roads are the safest they’ve ever been. But they must be safer. And we will not rest until they are.”

As part of the Department’s campaign to reduce traffic fatalities, Secretary LaHood will convene a National Distracted Driving Summit on Sept. 21 in Washington, D.C. The Secretary will bring together leading transportation officials, safety advocates, law enforcement, industry representatives, researchers and victims affected by distraction-related crashes to address challenges and identify opportunities for national anti-distracted driving efforts. This follows the first summit Secretary LaHood held in the Fall of 2009 that sparked a national conversation about texting and talking on cell phones while driving.

According to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study based on 2006 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for those between the ages of 3 and 34.

In addition to the record-breaking drop in fatalities, the number of people injured in motor vehicle crashes in 2009 declined for a 10th straight year in a row, falling an estimated 5.5 percent from 2008, according to NHTSA data released today.

Alcohol impaired driving fatalities declined by 7.4 percent in 2009 – 10,839 compared to 11,711 reported in 2008. Overall, 33 states and Puerto Rico experienced a decline in the number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in 2009 compared to 2008.

“Today’s numbers reflect the tangible benefits of record seat belt use and strong anti-drunk driving enforcement campaigns,” said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland. “But we are still losing more than 30,000 lives a year on our highways, and about a third of these involve drunk driving. We will continue to work with our state partners to strictly enforce both seat belt use and anti-drunk driving laws across this nation, every day and every night.”

Highlights of the latest Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and related NHTSA data include the following:

- 33,808 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2009, a 9.7 percent decline from 37,423 deaths reported in 2008, and the lowest number of deaths since 1950 (which had 33,186).
- An estimated 2.217 million people were injured in 2009, a 5.5 percent decline from 2.346 million in 2008.
- 30,797 fatal crashes occurred in 2009, down 9.9 percent from 34,172 in 2008. All crashes (fatal, injury and property damage only) were down by 5.3 percent in 2009 from a year ago.
- Forty-one states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico all had reductions in fatalities, led by Florida (with 422 fewer fatalities) and Texas (with 405 fewer fatalities).

Click [here](#) to view the latest 2009 FARS data.