

INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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MORE CRASH DEATHS OCCUR ON 4th OF JULY THAN ANY OTHER DAY; JULY 3 IS 2nd WORST

Arlington, VA — The upcoming Independence Day holiday is when the most motor vehicle deaths occur, based on experience during 1986-2002. Each year on this holiday, an average of 161 people die in crashes. This is 12 more deaths than the average on any other single day of the year and about 40 percent more crash deaths than occur on an average day. The second worst day for crash deaths during 1986-2002 was July 3. July 2 also was among the days with the most deaths.

DAYS WITH THE MOST CRASH DEATHS, 1986-2002

	<u>Total deaths</u>	<u>Avg. per day</u>
July 4	2,743	161
July 3	2,534	149
December 23	2,470	145
August 3	2,413	142
January 1	2,411	142
August 6	2,387	140
August 4	2,365	139
August 12	2,359	139
July 2	2,340	138
September 2	2,336	137
ALL DAYS		117

Six of the 10 days with the most deaths were holidays or near holidays. Besides the high toll on July 2-4, there was December 23, January 1, and September 2. The other four days on the "worst" list were in August.

Institute researchers analyzed data from the federal Fatality Analysis Reporting System, an annual census of fatal crashes on U.S. roads. The motor vehicle deaths were sorted by month, day, and

hour. The 17-year span 1986-2002 was chosen to balance the effects of weekend travel. Researchers also gathered information on the characteristics of the people and vehicles involved in the fatal crashes.

Allan Williams, the Institute's chief scientist, points out that "while more deaths do occur on some of the holidays, the toll of fatalities is relentless every day, all year long." The average during 1986-2002 was 117 deaths per day.

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DAYS WITH THE MOST PEDESTRIAN DEATHS, 1986-2002

	<u>Total deaths</u>	<u>Avg. per day</u>
January 1	410	24
October 31	401	24
December 23	373	22
December 20	357	21
November 2	351	21
October 26	350	21
November 3	348	20
November 10	344	20
November 1	340	20
December 18	339	20

Deaths by type of crash: About three of every four crash fatalities are occupants of passenger vehicles. Another 13 percent are pedestrians, and 7 percent are motorcyclists. While July 4 was the day with the highest average number of passenger vehicle occupant and motorcyclist deaths during 1986-2002, January 1 and October 31 (Halloween) were when the most pedestrians were killed.

Alcohol is a factor in a greater proportion of crash deaths on both the 4th of July and New Year's Day. Forty-one percent of the deaths on the 4th and 51 percent on January 1 involved high blood alcohol concentrations. These proportions compare with 33 percent on December 25 and January 8 (days in close proximity that aren't associated with New Year's) and 31 percent on June 27 and July 11.

CRASH DEATHS BY MONTH, 1986-2002

	<u>Total deaths</u>	<u>Avg. per day</u>	<u>Miles traveled (billions)</u>	<u>Deaths per billion miles</u>
January	51,694	98	2,996	17.3
February	47,247	98	2,860	16.5
March	54,645	104	3,328	16.4
April	55,710	109	3,328	16.7
May	62,426	118	3,534	17.7
June	64,152	126	3,526	18.2
July	68,099	129	3,658	18.6
August	69,731	132	3,677	19.0
September	63,965	125	3,366	19.0
October	66,553	126	3,477	19.1
November	61,145	120	3,237	18.9
December	62,071	118	3,258	19.1

Deaths by month and day of week:

More miles are traveled in August than any other month, and August averaged the most crash deaths per day (132). However, October and December averaged the highest death rate per billion miles traveled (19.1). January and

CRASH DEATHS BY DAY OF WEEK, 1986-2002

	<u>Avg. per day</u>
Sunday	132
Monday	98
Tuesday	95
Wednesday	98
Thursday	105
Friday	133
Saturday	158

February averaged the fewest miles traveled and the fewest deaths per day (98). The day of the week with the lowest average fatality count was Tuesday (95 deaths), followed by Mondays and Wednesdays. Far more motor vehicle deaths (158) occurred on Saturdays.

Toll of crash deaths doesn't resonate: "An average of 117 deaths per day is the equivalent of a major commercial airline disaster occurring every day of the 6,209 consecutive days of the 17-year span we analyzed," Williams says. "But there's a big difference in how society approaches these losses. When a plane goes down it's big news and there's a concentrated effort to find ways to prevent future crashes. But the toll of highway deaths doesn't attract the same attention." Nationwide tallies of crash deaths aren't available until months after the crashes occur. "However you tally the deaths or sort them by contributing factors, the total of 727,438 human lives lost over 17 years represents a huge burden on the public health," Williams concludes.

End 3-pp release on temporal factors in crash deaths

More information: www.iihs.org