

“A Good Year, But We All Must Do More”

That was the message from U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters on July 23, 2007, when she announced the latest annual, nationwide, traffic-fatality statistics. As she noted, 42,642 people died on the nation’s roads in 2006, a drop of 868 deaths from 2005 and the largest decline in total deaths in 15 years. This 2-percent reduction in traffic deaths contributed to a fatality rate of 1.42 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), the lowest ever recorded.

Most significantly, fatalities among occupants of passenger vehicles—cars, SUVs, vans, and pickups—continued a steady decline to 30,521, the lowest annual total since 1993, said Secretary Peters. Injuries also were down in 2006. Passenger-car injuries declined 6.2 percent, and large-truck injuries fell 15 percent.

Secretary Peters cautioned, however, that troubling trends continue in motorcycle and alcohol-related crashes. The former jumped 5.1 percent from 2005 (and now accounts for 11 percent of total fatalities), while the latter rose only slightly more than the previous year. This is the ninth year in a row the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has seen an increase in motorcycle deaths.

“Proper training, clothing, gear, and, above all, helmet use are essential to reversing this deadly trend,” said Secretary Peters.

With no improvement in the number of alcohol-related fatalities last year, NHTSA Administrator Nicole Nason noted that drunk-driving enforcement will continue to be a top priority for the Department of Transportation (DoT). In 2006, 15,121 fatalities involved a driver, motorcycle operator, pedestrian, or cyclist with a blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 or higher, compared to 15,102 in 2005.

“There is a personal story behind these statistics, and for every alcohol-related fatality, the family left behind is shattered forever,” said Administrator Nason. 

Information for this article was adapted from a DoT press release.

According to a press release from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), “Deaths from motorcycle crashes have more than doubled in the past 10 years—from 2,116 in 1997 to 4,810 in 2006—an alarming trend. Another 88,000 people were injured in motorcycle crashes in 2006. The yearly number of motorcycle deaths is more than double the annual total number of people killed in all aviation, rail, marine, and pipeline accidents combined. Head injuries are a leading cause of death in motorcycle crashes.”

While motorcycle fatalities in the Navy have increased 65 percent in the past 10 years, they declined 31 percent from FY06 to FY07.—Ed.

Description	2005	2006	Change	% Change
Total*	43,510	42,642	-868	-2.0%
<i>Motorists Killed in</i>				
Passenger Vehicles	31,549	30,521	-1,028	-3.3%
Passenger Cars	18,512	17,800	-712	-3.8%
Light Trucks	13,037	12,721	-316	-2.4%
Large Trucks	804	805	+1	+0.1%
Motorcycles	4,576	4,810	+234	+5.1%
<i>Nonmotorists Killed</i>				
Pedestrians	4,892	4,784	-108	-2.2%
Pedalcyclists	786	773	-13	-1.7%
Other/Unknown	186	183	-3	-1.6%

Source: FARS 2005 (Final), 2006 Annual Report File (ARF)
*Total includes other/unknown occupants not shown in table

Measure	2005	2006	Change	% Change
Fatality Rate	1.46	1.42	-0.04	-2.7%
Injury Rate	90	86	-4	-4.4%

Source: FARS, GES and FHWA VMT (March 2007 TVT)

Description	2005	2006	Change	% Change
Total*	2,699,000	2,575,000	-124,000	-4.6%
<i>Motorists Injured in</i>				
Passenger Vehicles	2,446,000	2,331,000	-115,000	-4.7%
Passenger Cars	1,573,000	1,475,000	-98,000	-6.2%
Light Trucks	872,000	857,000	-15,000	-1.7%
Large Trucks	27,000	23,000	-4,000	-15%
Motorcycles	87,000	88,000	+1,000	+1.1%
<i>Nonmotorists Injured</i>				
Pedestrians	64,000	61,000	-3,000	-4.7%
Pedalcyclists	45,000	44,000	-1,000	-2.2%
Other/Unknown	8,000	7,000	-1,000	-13%

Source: NASS GES 2005, 2006 Annual Files
*Total includes other/unknown occupants not shown in table
Numbers in bold are statistically significant.

BAC Level	2005	2006	Change	% Change
BAC .01+	17,590	17,602	+12	+0.1%
BAC .08+	15,102	15,121	+19	+0.1%

Source: FARS 2005 (Final), 2006 Annual Report File [ARF]