



LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

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Injuries at record low, but fatalities up sharply on Louisiana roads in 2020

Louisiana set a record in 2020 for the fewest motor vehicle crash injuries, but that same year also produced the most fatalities in Louisiana in a dozen years.

The 64,500 people who were injured in crashes in Louisiana last year represent the lowest number of injuries since the state began compiling detailed statistics in 1988, according to the Center for Analytics and Research in Transportation Safety at LSU. Meanwhile, crashes involving motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians killed 828 people, which alarmingly rates as the highest number of deaths in a single year since 2008.

These Louisiana statistics are in line with national figures that show a sharp increase in fatalities even though fewer drivers were on the road in 2020 because of lockdowns in response to the pandemic.

“Fewer cars led to fewer injuries in 2020. However, less traffic led to more speeding, and too many people were not wearing their seat belts, which always leads to more fatalities,” said Lisa Freeman, executive director of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission. “It’s truly tragic because many of those fatalities could have been prevented if drivers would obey the speed limit and everyone would buckle up.”

Nationally, traffic volume decreased by 13 percent in 2020, but crashes killed 38,680 people, the most since 2007, according to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration report. NHTSA said its research suggests that even with fewer drivers, those “who remained on the roads engaged in more risky behavior, including speeding, failing to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.”

“It is not a coincidence that people who don’t wear a seat belt are more likely to be killed in a crash,” Freeman said. “Wearing your seat belt is still the best way to protect yourself in a vehicle.”

Other significant findings from the 2020 Louisiana statistics show that:

- The number of fatalities in crashes with a known blood-alcohol content of .08 or higher remained above 30 percent from 2019 to 2020.
- Bicycle crash fatalities increased by more than 54 percent, and bicycle injuries decreased by 21 percent.
- Motorcycle crash fatalities were down by nearly 6 percent, and motorcycle injuries decreased by nearly 11 percent.
- Pedestrian fatalities were up by 19 percent.

For more information, contact:
Mark Lambert
225-937-8113
mark@lambert-media.com
www.lambert-media.com