RUDNY & SALLMANN FORENSICS NEWS

Fall 2021 Newsletter

PEDESTRIAN ACCIDENTS

Data from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) have shown a projected 4.8% increase in pedestrian deaths for 2020 over 2019. This is surprising as there was a marked reduction in overall vehicle miles traveled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pedestrian fatalities are projected to have dropped in 19 states and increased in 31 states and the District of Columbia when comparing data from 2019 and projections for January to December 2020. The projected data for 2020 follows an increasing trend since 2009 and looks to equal a 30 year high.
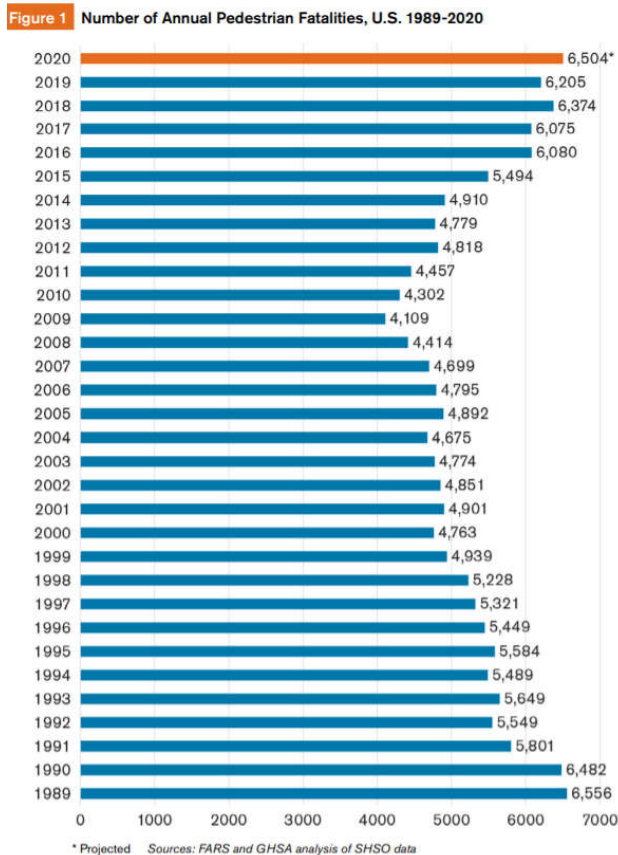

Figure 1. Data from GHSA and Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS)

The Federal Highway Association (FHWA) has reported a 13.2% decrease in vehicle miles traveled from 2019 to 2020. However, the projected 2020 pedestrian fatality rate of *2.3* per one billion vehicle miles traveled is a 21% increase from the rate of *1.9* in 2019. This increase in the rate is a combination of the effects of reduced miles driven and increased pedestrian deaths. The projected increase in the pedestrian fatality rate in 2020 also surpasses the rates from 2016 (*1.92*), 2017 (*1.89*), and 2018 (*1.98*).

The majority of the increase in pedestrian fatalities have occurred during nighttime hours. From 2009 to 2018 the number of pedestrians killed at night increased 67% compared to a 16% increase during daylight hours. In 2019 approximately 75% of pedestrian fatalities were during nighttime hours. Factors such as low-beam vs. high-beam headlight use, lighted vs. unlighted roads, and what the pedestrian is wearing (dark/light/reflective) weigh into when and where a pedestrian can be seen by a driver.

Fatal accidents for pedestrians involving sport-utility vehicles (SUVs) increased 81% from 2009 to 2018 compared to a 55% increase for all passenger vehicles over the same years. SUVs tend to weigh more than passenger cars and have a higher grill and hood. These factors cause SUVs to impact pedestrians differently and could contribute to the increase in pedestrian fatalities.

ACCIDENT STATISTICS – 2020

As previously mentioned, overall vehicle miles traveled in 2020 decreased by 13.2%. However, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has projected increases in fatalities in not just pedestrian accidents but motor vehicle accidents as well. The fatality rate per million miles traveled increased 23% in 2020 to *1.37* from the rate of *1.11* in 2019. Per NHTSA projections accident attributes and factors that showed the largest increases from 2019 to 2020 include:

Occupant ejection – up 20%

Unrestrained occupants of passenger vehicles – up 15%

Urban interstates – up 15%

Urban local/collector roads – up 12%

Rural local/collector roads – up 11%

Speeding related crashes – up 11%

During nighttime – up 11%

During weekends – up 9%

Rollover crashes – up 9%

Single vehicle crashes – up 9%

Police-reported alcohol involved crashes – up 9%

Two categories are projected to decrease for 2020:

Fatalities in crashes involving large trucks – down 2%

Fatalities of person 65+ years – down 9%

ACCIDENT STATISTICS – 2020 – EXCESSIVE SPEEDING

One of the factors showing an increase from 2019 to 2020 was crashes involving speeding vehicles. Across the country the number of tickets issued in 2020 for speeding in excess of 100 mph showed remarkable increases according to multiple Associated Press articles. From January to June 2020 California Highway Patrol nearly doubled its pre-pandemic levels of tickets issued for speeding in excess of 100 mph. Iowa State Patrol recorded a 101% increase from January to August for speeding tickets exceeding 100 mph as well as a 75% increase in tickets for speeds exceeding the speed limit by 25 mph or more. Ohio state troopers issued 2200 tickets from April to September 2020 for driving faster than 100 mph, a 61% increase from the same time in 2019. Utah state police issued 23% more tickets for speeding more than 20 mph over the speed limit from March through August 2020 compared to the same time in 2019. Pennsylvania state police noted an increase in drivers exceeding 100 mph in March and from June through August recorded a 25% increase over 2019 for the same months.

As vehicle speed increases stopping distance becomes longer. When vehicle speed doubles, braking distance to stop the vehicle quadruples.

NHTSA AUTOMOBILE INFORMATION

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) provides a number of ways to research information for automobiles. The main NHTSA website (*nhtsa.gov*) has many useful links to such topics as Ratings, Recalls, and general information. Also, the website *safercar.gov* will take you to NHTSA's dashboard for their 'SaferCar' campaign. From this dashboard you are able to 'Report a Safety Problem' and look up information related to NHTSA's 5-star rating system for Vehicles, Car Seats, and Tires. From the dashboard you can also search for Recall information or request to subscribe to receive an email notification of Recalls.
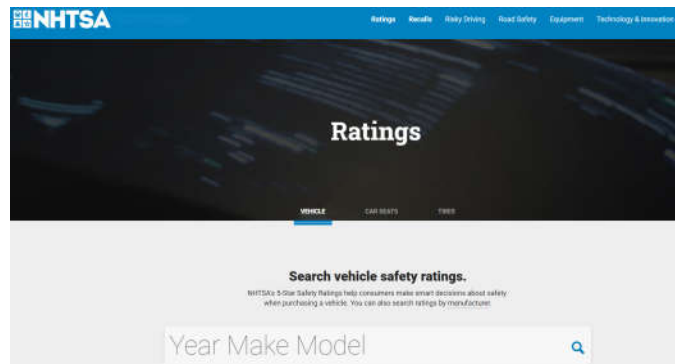

Figure 2. nhtsa.gov/ratings

Looking up a specific vehicle on the NHTSA website will provide information for Recalls, Investigations, Complaints, Frontal, Side, and Rollover crash NHTSA 5-star ratings, and available safety equipment and systems.

As an example, 2020's best-selling vehicle the Ford F-Series per the NHTSA website shows: 7 recalls, 1 investigation, 104 complaints, and an overall safety rating of 4 stars.
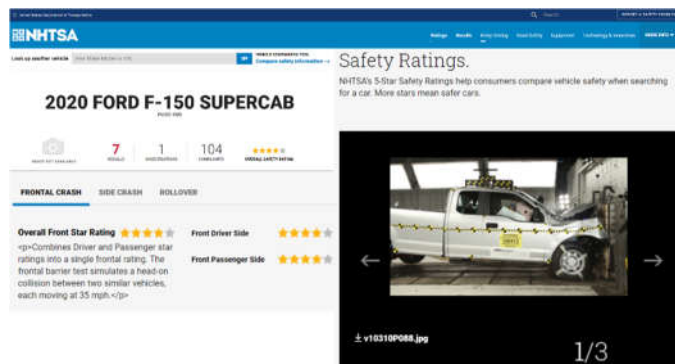

Figure 3. NHTSA vehicle search results for 2020 Ford F-150 Supercab

NHTSA also maintains databases of crash test information as part of New Car Assessment Programs (NCAP) when models are introduced or go through updates and modifications. Another database maintained by NHTSA is the Crash Investigation Sampling System (CISS). This is a repository of actual accident information which provides numerous methods to filter data including vehicle make/model, vehicle damage, occupant information, injuries sustained, and restraints used (seatbelts, airbags, and car seats).

At times mining through all this data can be daunting. Please feel free to contact us to aid in your search for vehicle information.

We hope you will find this information helpful. As always, if you have any questions about any of the topics presented, we will be happy to speak with you without obligation.