NHTSA has revised the definition of a speeding-related crash. A crash is considered speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speeding-related offense or if an officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, or exceeding the posted speed limit was a contributing factor in the crash.

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. The economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is estimated by NHTSA to be $40.4 billion per year. In 2001, speeding was a contributing factor in 30 percent of all fatal crashes, and 12,850 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes.

Motor vehicle crashes cost society an estimated $7,300 per second. The total economic cost of crashes was estimated at $230.6 billion in 2000. The 2001 costs of speeding-related crashes were estimated to be $40.4 billion — $76,865 per minute or $1,281 per second.

Speeding reduces a driver’s ability to steer safely around curves or objects in the roadway, extends the distance necessary to stop a vehicle, and increases the distance a vehicle travels while the driver reacts to a dangerous situation.

Figure 1. Fatal Crashes by Speeding Status, 1991-2001
For drivers involved in fatal crashes, young males are the most likely to be speeding. The relative proportion of speeding-related crashes to all crashes decreases with increasing driver age. In 2001, 36 percent of the male drivers 15 to 20 years old who were involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash.

In 2001, NHTSA began using a revised method — *multiple imputation* — to estimate missing information about blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels for persons involved in fatal crashes. The alcohol estimates in this fact sheet are based on the imputation method. More information on the new multiple imputation method, including detailed tabulations of alcohol involvement in various categories (age, sex, time of day, etc.), is available in NHTSA Technical Report DOT HS 809 403, *Transitioning to Multiple Imputation: A New Method to Estimate Missing Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) Values in FARS.*

Alcohol and speeding are clearly a deadly combination. Alcohol involvement is prevalent for drivers involved in speeding-related crashes. In 2001, 39 percent of the *intoxicated* drivers (BAC = 0.08 or higher) involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared with only 14 percent of the *sober* drivers (BAC = 0.00) involved in fatal crashes.

Alcohol and speeding seem to go hand in hand. In 2001, 29 percent of the *speeding* drivers under 21 years old who were involved in fatal crashes were also intoxicated, with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08 (grams per deciliter [g/dl]) or greater. In contrast, only 12 percent of the *nonspeeding* drivers under age 21 involved in fatal crashes in 2001 were intoxicated.

For drivers between 21 and 24 years of age who were involved in fatal crashes in 2001, 51 percent of *speeding* drivers were intoxicated, compared with only 25 percent of *nonspeeding* drivers.
For both speeding and nonspeeding drivers involved in fatal crashes, the percentage of those who had been drinking, with BAC 0.01 or greater, at the time the crash occurred was higher at night than during the day. Between midnight and 3 am, 78 percent of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.

In 2001, 39 percent of the intoxicated drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared with only 14 percent of sober drivers involved in fatal crashes.

“For between midnight and 3 am, 78 percent of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.”
In 2001, 39 percent of all motorcyclists involved in fatal crashes were speeding. The percentage of speeding involvement in fatal crashes was approximately twice as high for motorcyclists as for drivers of passenger cars or light trucks, and the percentage of alcohol involvement was about 37 percent higher for motorcyclists.

“Speeding involvement for motorcyclists in fatal crashes was twice as high as for car and light truck drivers.”

Figure 6. Speeding, Alcohol Involvement, and Failure To Use Restraints Among Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes by Vehicle Type, 2001
In 2001, only 42 percent of speeding passenger vehicle drivers under 21 years old who were involved in fatal crashes were wearing safety belts at the time of the crash. In contrast, 65 percent of nonspeeding drivers in the same age group were restrained. For drivers 21 years and older, the percentage of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes who were using restraints at the time of the crash was 40 percent, but 68 percent of nonspeeding drivers in fatal crashes were restrained.

In 2001, 19 percent of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes had an invalid license at the time of the crash, compared with 9 percent of nonspeeding drivers.

Speeding was a factor in 28 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred on dry roads in 2001 and in 33 percent of those that occurred on wet roads. Speeding was a factor in 50 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred when there was snow or slush on the road and in 62 percent of those that occurred on icy roads.

Speeding was involved in nearly one-third (29 percent) of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones in 2001.

In 2001, 86 percent of speeding-related fatalities occurred on roads that were not Interstate highways.

Figure 7. Speeding-Related Fatalities by Road Type, 2001

"Among drivers in fatal crashes in 2001, those who were not speeding were nearly twice as likely to be wearing safety belts as those who were speeding at the time of the crash."

"Only 14 percent of speeding-related fatalities occur on Interstate highways."

For more information:

Information on speeding involvement in traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NPO-121, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. NCSA information can also be obtained by telephone or by fax-on-demand at 1-800-934-8517. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/ncsa. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

## Table 1. Speeding-Related Traffic Fatalities by Road Type and Speed Limit, 2001

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### USA

|       | 42,116                   | 12,850 | 1,287 | 377 | 3,352 | 541 | 1,442 | 878 | 1,329 | 1,329 |

### Notes:
- Totals may not equal sum of components due to independent rounding.
- The total column for speeding-related fatalities includes fatalities that occurred on roads for which the speed limit was unknown.
- The total column for costs of speeding-related crashes includes costs for crashes that occurred on unknown road types.
- Costs are based on preliminary estimates.

*Of the total number of speeding-related fatalities in 2001, 5,627 occurred on roads with posted speed limits between 55 and 65 mph, and 912 occurred on roads with speed limits above 65 mph.