

# Traffic Safety Facts

## Crash • Stats

DOT HS 810 870

A Brief Statistical Summary

December 2007

# Fatalities Related to Alcohol-Impaired Driving During The Christmas and New Year's Day Holiday Periods

## Summary

On average from 2001 to 2005 (the last year for which complete data is available), about 40 percent of all fatalities during the Christmas and New Year holiday periods have occurred in crashes where at least one of the involved drivers<sup>1</sup> was alcohol-impaired<sup>2</sup> as compared to about 28 percent of all fatalities during the rest of December. This year, NHTSA estimates<sup>3</sup> that about 430 fatalities could potentially occur in motor vehicle traffic crashes during the Christmas and New Year Holiday periods in crashes involving an impaired driver. In 2007, both Christmas and New Year's fall on Tuesdays and hence both holiday periods are considered four-day<sup>4</sup> holiday periods for reporting purposes.

This Crash•Stats presents data that highlight the higher rate of involvement of impaired drivers in fatal crashes during the two holiday periods in December and compares the trend with the rate of involvement during the rest of the days in December. The number of such fatalities per day (fatalities averaged over the number of days in the holiday) during the two holiday periods is higher as compared to fatalities per day during the rest of December.

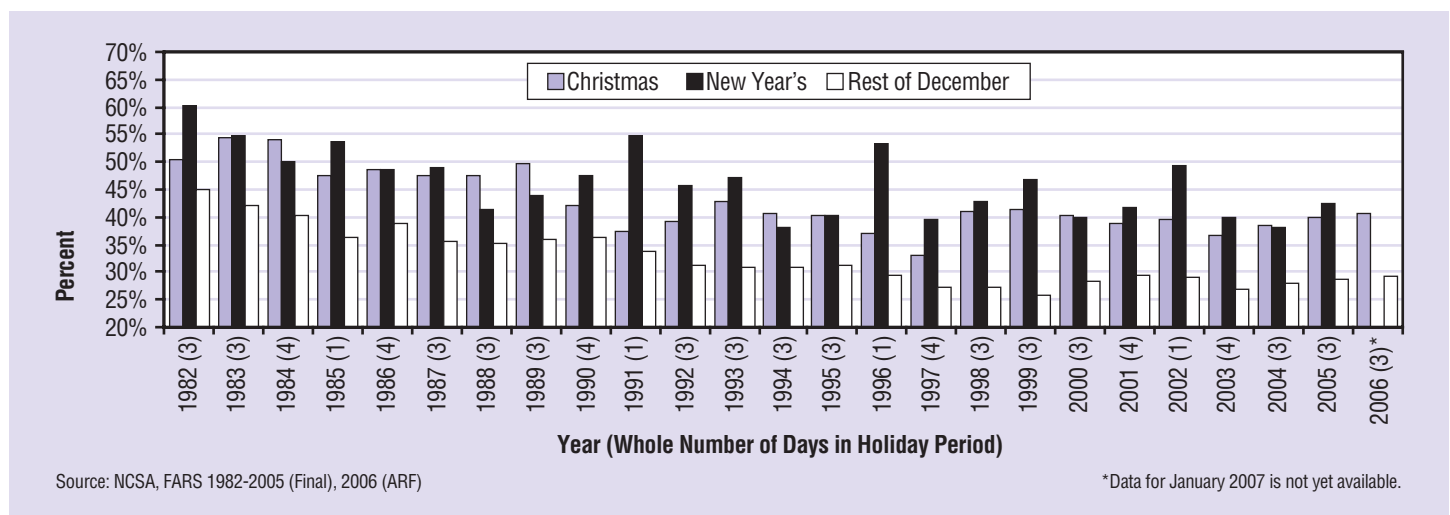
## Results

Recent data from NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS, 2001 to 2005) show that fatalities associated with impaired driving, expressed as number of fatalities per day, are higher during the Christmas and New Year's Day holiday periods as compared to the fatalities occurring during the other days in December (See Table 1). In order to study overall trends in fatalities that occur in crashes involving at least one impaired driver, FARS data from 1982 to 2005 were used. Figure 1 presents the percent of all motor vehicle traffic fatalities that occur in such crashes during the two holiday

**Table 1: Fatalities per Day in Crashes Involving an Impaired Driver by Holiday Period, 2001–2005**

| Holiday Period   | Fatalities per Day | Percent of Total Fatalities |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| New Year's       | 54                 | 41%                         |
| Christmas        | 45                 | 38%                         |
| Rest of December | 33                 | 28%                         |
| Whole Year       | 36                 | 31%                         |

**Figure 1: Fatalities that occur in crashes involving at least one impaired driver as a percent of all fatalities, 1982–2006**



Source: NCSA, FARS 1982-2005 (Final), 2006 (ARF)

\*Data for January 2007 is not yet available.

<sup>1</sup>Drivers imply any motor vehicle drivers or motorcycle operators.

<sup>2</sup>Drivers or Motorcycle Operators with blood alcohol content (BAC) = .08 grams per deciliter or above.

<sup>3</sup>Based on a simple average of holiday weekends 3 or 4 days long from recent years [2001 – 2006].

<sup>4</sup>Beginning 6 p.m. the Friday before and ending 5:59 a.m. the Wednesday after.

