

FARS has undergone numerous improvements since then, to include the addition of “pre-crash” data—information concerning conditions existing prior to the crash.

Uses of FARS Data

FARS data is used extensively throughout NHTSA, and thousands of FARS information requests are received from State and local governments, research and safety advocacy organizations, private citizens, automobile and insurance industries, Congress, and the press. FARS data can be used to answer a multitude of questions concerning the safety of vehicles, drivers, traffic situations, roadways, and environmental conditions. Some specific policy and research uses of FARS data include:

- Alcohol-related legislation,
- Motorcycle helmet legislation,
- Restraint usage legislation,
- Speed limit laws,
- Vehicle safety designs,
- Large-truck safety, and
- Air bag effectiveness.



How Is Personal Information in FARS Data Protected?

Personal identifying information such as names, addresses, or social security numbers are not recorded, and each vehicle's Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) is truncated. All publicly available FARS data conforms to the Privacy Act.

How Can FARS Data Be Obtained?

FARS data is available for every year since FARS was established in 1975. Users can query the FARS database (back to 1994) directly using the FARS Encyclopedia at www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Main/index.aspx, access data tables at www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Main/index.aspx, download files via FTP at <ftp://ftp.nhtsa.dot.gov/fars/>, or make requests through the Publications and Data Requests page at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Cats/Index.aspx. Information requests can also be made by phone at 800-934-8517, or by e-mail at ncsaweb@dot.gov. Written requests can be sent to:

**National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
National Center for Statistics and Analysis
Data Reporting and Information Division (NVS-424)
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590**



U.S. Department of Transportation
**National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration**



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Fatality
Analysis
Reporting
System



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**



What is the Fatality Analysis Reporting System?

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) contains data derived from a census of fatal traffic crashes within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. To be included in FARS, a crash must involve a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public and must result in the death of at least one person (occupant of a vehicle or a non-motorist) within 30 days of the crash.

FARS was conceived, designed, and developed by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 1975 to provide an overall measure of highway safety, to help identify traffic safety problems, to suggest solutions, and to help provide an objective basis to evaluate the effectiveness of motor vehicle safety standards and highway safety programs.

How Does FARS Work?

NHTSA has a cooperative agreement with an agency in each State government to provide specific information in a standard format on fatal crashes occurring in the State. The agreements are managed by NCSA's FARS program staff. The State employees who gather, translate, and transmit the data are called FARS analysts. The number of analysts in each State varies according to the State. NHTSA provides each FARS analyst with formal training.

All FARS data on fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes is gathered from the State's own source documents and is coded onto standard FARS forms or directly

into a microcomputer data entry system. The analysts obtain the documents needed to complete the FARS cases, which generally include some or all of the following:

- Police accident reports,
- State vehicle registration files,
- State driver licensing files,
- State highway department data,
- Vital records department data,
- Death certificates,
- Coroner/medical examiner reports, and
- Emergency medical service reports.

Each FARS analyst enters coded data through a local computer into NHTSA's central FARS Web-accessed database daily. The data is automatically checked online for acceptable range values and consistency, and again reviewed for quality upon arrival at NHTSA.

Range checks ensure that the codes submitted are valid. For example, a code "4" for the element "Sex" would be rejected by the system since "1" (male), "2" (female), and "9" (unknown) are the only valid codes.

Consistency checks ensure that no inconsistent data is entered. For example, if an analyst codes "11 a.m." as the time of the crash and "dusk" as the light condition, these codes would all be rejected, as they are inconsistent.

Quality control is a vital system feature. In addition to the range and consistency checks, other checks for timeliness, completeness, and accuracy are conducted throughout the year.

What Data Is Included in FARS?

The FARS database contains descriptions, in a standardized format, of each fatal crash reported. Each crash has 143 different coded data elements (as of 2013) that characterize the crash, the vehicles, and the people involved. The specific data elements may be modified slightly each year to conform to changing user needs, vehicle characteristics, and highway safety emphasis areas. Data comes primarily from the police accident report (PAR) in that State, but also from death certificates, State coroners and medical examiners, State driver and vehicle registration records, and emergency medical services records.

Location Information

In 2000, FARS began recording geographic information systems (GIS) location information for each fatal crash collected in the database. These crash location coordinates added great value by allowing the FARS database to be analyzed using spatial statistics tools as well as conventional statistical tools. The crash location information also allows FARS data to be enriched by linking the database to additional sources of information. The State Traffic Safety Information Web page enables users to view fatal crashes by State and county using the Google maps feature at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-30/ncsa/STSI/USA%20WEB%20REPORT.HTM.

Uniform Data

Beginning in 2006, NHTSA initiated a data standardization program to better align FARS with other NHTSA data systems using the Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria, the same crash data element guideline used by most States.

