



Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities for the First Quarter of 2017

Summary

A statistical projection of traffic fatalities for the first quarter of 2017 shows that an estimated 8,050 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes. This represents a decrease of about 1.2 percent as compared to 8,150 fatalities that were estimated to have occurred in the first quarter of 2016, as shown in Table 1. This represents the first year-to-year quarterly decline in fatalities since the third quarter of 2014, as shown in Table 1. Preliminary data reported by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) shows that vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the first three months of 2017 increased by about 11.4 billion miles—about a 1.5-percent increase. Also shown in Table 1 are

the fatality rates per 100 million VMT, by quarter. The fatality rate for the first quarter of 2017 decreased to 1.08 fatalities per 100 million VMT down from the projected rate of 1.11 fatalities per 100 million VMT in the first quarter of 2016. The actual counts for 2016 and 2017 and the ensuing percentage change from 2016 to 2017 will be further revised as the FARS annual reporting files for 2016 become available later this year, as well as when the final file for 2016 and the annual reporting file for 2017 are available next year. These estimates will be further refined when the projections for the first 6 months of 2017 are released in late September.

Table 1: Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Quarter, Full Year, and the Percentage Change From the Corresponding Quarter or Full Year in the Previous Year

Quarter	1st Quarter (Jan–Mar)	2nd Quarter (Apr–Jun)	3rd Quarter (Jul–Sep)	4th Quarter (Oct–Dec)	Total (Full Year)
Fatalities and Percentage Change in Fatalities for the Corresponding Quarter/Half From the Prior Year					
2005	9,239	11,005	11,897	11,369	43,510
2006	9,558 [+3.5%]	10,942 [-0.6%]	11,395 [-4.2%]	10,813 [-4.9%]	42,708 [-1.8%]
2007	9,354 [-2.1%]	10,611 [-3.0%]	11,056 [-3.0%]	10,238 [-5.3%]	41,259 [-3.4%]
2008	8,459 [-9.6%]	9,435 [-11.1%]	9,947 [-10.0%]	9,582 [-6.4%]	37,423 [-9.3%]
2009	7,552 [-10.7%]	8,975 [-4.9%]	9,104 [-8.5%]	8,252 [-13.9%]	33,883 [-9.5%]
2010	6,755 [-10.6%]	8,522 [-5.0%]	9,226 [+1.3%]	8,496 [+3.0%]	32,999 [-2.6%]
2011	6,726 [-0.4%]	8,227 [-3.5%]	8,984 [-2.6%]	8,542 [+0.5%]	32,479 [-1.6%]
2012	7,521 [+11.8%]	8,612 [+4.7%]	9,171 [+2.1%]	8,478 [-0.7%]	33,782 [+4.0%]
2013	7,166 [-4.7%]	8,207 [-4.7%]	9,024 [-1.6%]	8,496 [+0.2%]	32,893 [-2.6%]
2014	6,856 [-4.3%]	8,179 [-0.3%]	8,799 [-2.5%]	8,910 [+4.9%]	32,744 [-0.5%]
2015	7,335 [+7.0%]	8,765 [+7.2%]	9,708 [+10.3%]	9,284 [+4.2%]	35,092 [+7.2%]
2016 [†]	8,150 [+11.1%]	9,500 [+8.4%]	9,975 [+2.8%]	9,875 [+6.4%]	37,500 [+6.9%]
2017 [†]	8,050 [-1.2%]	—	—	—	—
Fatality Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)					
2005	1.32	1.42	1.54	1.54	1.46
2006	1.35	1.41	1.47	1.44	1.42
2007	1.31	1.35	1.41	1.37	1.36
2008	1.22	1.25	1.33	1.32	1.26
2009	1.09	1.16	1.17	1.12	1.15
2010	0.98	1.09	1.18	1.14	1.11
2011	0.98	1.09	1.18	1.17	1.10
2012	1.08	1.12	1.21	1.16	1.14
2013	1.04	1.07	1.17	1.15	1.10
2014	0.99	1.03	1.11	1.17	1.08
2015	1.02	1.08	1.19	1.18	1.13
2016 [†]	1.11	1.16	1.21	1.25	1.18
2017 [†]	1.08	—	—	—	—

[†]2016 and 2017 statistical projections and rates based on these projections. Source: Fatalities, 2005–2014 FARS Final File, 2015 FARS Annual Report File.

VMT: FHWA January 2017 Traffic Volume Trends for 2017 VMT.

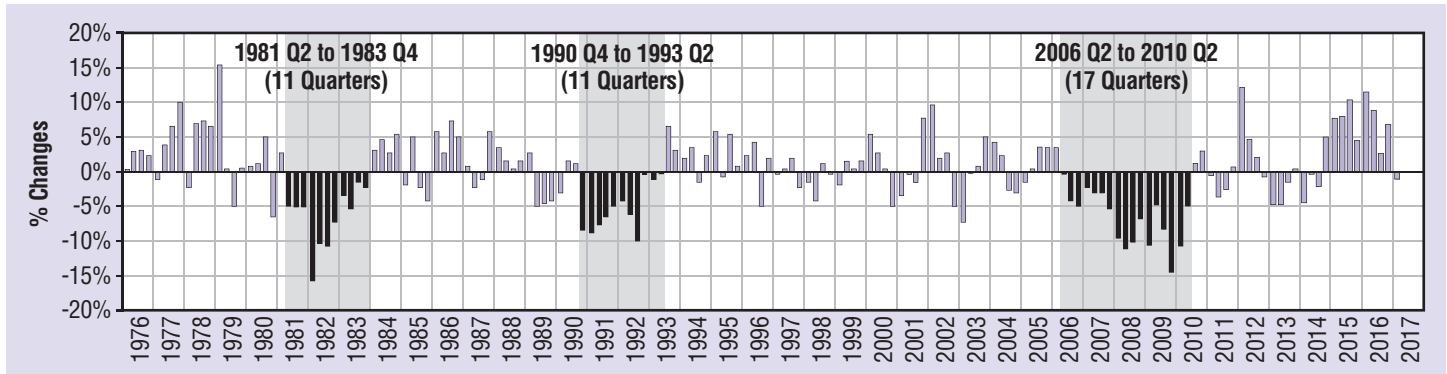
Figure 1 shows the historical trend of the percentage change every quarter from the same quarter in the previous year, going back to 1976. NHTSA has fatality data going back to

1975, and the shading in the chart depicts the years during which there were significant numbers of consecutive quarters with declines as compared to the corresponding quarters of

the previous years. The declines during the early 1980s and 1990s lasted 11 consecutive quarters, while the most recent

decline occurred over 17 consecutive quarters ending in the second quarter of 2010.

Figure 1: Percentage Change in Fatalities in Every Quarter as Compared to the Fatalities in the Same Quarter During the Previous Year



Discussion

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is continuing to gather/finalize data on crash fatalities for 2015, 2016 and 2017 using information from police accident reports and other sources. It is too soon to speculate on the contributing factors or potential implications of any changes in deaths on our roadways. The final data for 2015 as well as the annual file for 2016 will be available in late fall of 2017, and usually results in the revision of fatality totals and the ensuing rates and percentage changes. In addition, the annual reporting file for 2017 will be available in late 2018 and will result in further revision of the rates and percentage changes.

In the last few years, since recording a significant increase of 11.8 percent during the first quarter of 2012, the magnitude of the increases steadily declined during each subsequent quarter. Fatalities are reported to have increased by about 4.7 percent in the second quarter and by about 2.1 percent in the third quarter of 2012. Subsequently, beginning with the fourth quarter of 2012, fatalities have declined in seven out of eight quarters (2013 Q4 was a marginal increase) until the 4.9-percent increase reported for the fourth quarter of 2014. Fatalities increased over nine consecutive quarters beginning with the fourth quarter of 2014. The 2016 fatality rates per 100 million VMT, when compared to the rates for the corresponding quarters in 2015, were higher for all four quarters of 2016. The first quarter of 2017 represents the first quarter in 10 quarters that is projected to have a year-to-year quarterly decrease in fatalities.

Data

The data used in this analysis comes from several sources: NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), FastFARS (FF),



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

and Monthly Fatality Counts (MFC); and from FHWA's VMT estimates. FARS is a census of fatal traffic crashes in 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 and must result in the death of at least one person (occupant of a vehicle or a nonoccupant) within 30 days of the crash. FARS final files from January 2003 to December 2014 and the FARS Annual Report file in 2015 are used. The FF program is designed as an Early Fatality Notification System to capture fatality counts from States more rapidly and in real-time. It aims to provide near-real-time notification of fatality counts from all jurisdictions reporting to FARS. The MFC data provides monthly fatality counts by State through sources that are independent from the FastFARS or FARS systems. MFCs from January 2003 up to April 2017 are used. MFCs are reported mid-month for all prior months of the year. In order to estimate the traffic fatality counts for the first quarter of 2017, time series cross-section regression was applied to analyze the data with both cross-sectional values (by NHTSA Region) and time series (by month), to model the relationship among FARS, MFC, and FF, the details of which are available in a companion Research Note. The methodology used to generate the estimates for 2017 Q1 is the same as the one used by NHTSA to project the increase in the fatalities for the whole of 2016 (Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2016, Report No. DOT HS 812 401).

Suggested APA Format Citation for this document:

National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2017, December). *Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities for the First Quarter of 2017* (Crash•Stats Brief Statistical Summary. Report No. DOT HS 812 436). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

For questions regarding the information presented in this document, please contact NCSAWEB@dot.gov. Internet users may access this Crash•Stats and other general information on traffic safety at www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/CATS/index.aspx.