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

Traffic Safety Facts
CRASH•STATS

DOT HS 813 833 A Brief Statistical Summary July 2026

Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities And Fatality Rate for the First Quarter of 2026

Summary

A statistical projection of traffic fatalities for the first quarter of 2026 shows an estimated 7,770 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes, a decrease of about 4.3 percent compared to the 8,120 fatalities projected to have occurred in the first quarter of 2025 (*Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate in 2025*, Report No. DOT HS 813 800), as shown in Table 1. The first quarter of 2026 represents the 16th consecutive quarterly decline in fatalities beginning with the second quarter of 2022.

Preliminary data reported by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) shows that vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the first quarter of 2026 increased by about 11.1 billion miles, or about a 1.4-percent increase. Table 1 also shows the fatality rates per 100 million VMT, by quarter and year. In the first quarter of 2026 the fatality rate dropped to 0.99 fatalities per 100 million VMT, down from the projected rate of 1.05 fatalities per 100 million VMT in the first quarter of 2025. If realized, the rate of 0.99 represents the second lowest first quarter fatality rate, compared to the 0.98 achieved in 2010 Q1 as well as 2011 Q1.

For the NHTSA regional differences, 8 of the 10 NHTSA regions are projected to have decreases in fatalities and fatality rate per 100 million VMT in the first quarter of 2026 as compared to the first quarter of 2025. Also, 30 States and Puerto Rico are projected to have decreases in fatalities. The fatality counts for 2025 and 2026 and the ensuing percentage change from 2025 to 2026 will be slightly revised when the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Annual Reporting File (ARF) for 2025 is available later this year, as well as when the Final File for 2025 and the ARF for 2026 are available next year. These estimates will be further refined when the projections for the first 6 months of 2026 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

Year	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 and Total From the Previous Year					
2014	6,856 [-4.3%]	8,179 [-0.3%]	8,799 [-2.5%]	8,910 [+4.9%]	32,744 [-0.5%]
2015	7,370 [+7.5%]	8,823 [+7.9%]	9,805 [+11.4%]	9,486 [+6.5%]	35,484 [+8.4%]
2016	8,154 [+10.6%]	9,563 [+8.4%]	10,078 [+2.8%]	10,011 [+5.5%]	37,806 [+6.5%]
2017	8,301 [+1.8%]	9,460 [-1.1%]	10,081 [+0.0%]	9,631 [-3.8%]	37,473 [-0.9%]
2018	8,203 [-1.2%]	9,323 [-1.4%]	9,934 [-1.5%]	9,375 [-2.7%]	36,835 [-1.7%]
2019	7,832 [-4.5%]	9,193 [-1.4%]	9,994 [+0.6%]	9,336 [-0.4%]	36,355 [-1.3%]
2020	7,901 [+0.9%]	9,164 [-0.3%]	11,358 [+13.6%]	10,584 [+13.4%]	39,007 [+7.3%]
2021	8,906 [+12.7%]	11,149 [+21.7%]	11,828 [+4.1%]	11,347 [+7.2%]	43,230 [+10.8%]
2022	9,545 [+7.2%]	10,491 [-5.9%]	11,643 [-1.6%]	11,042 [-2.7%]	42,721 [-1.2%]

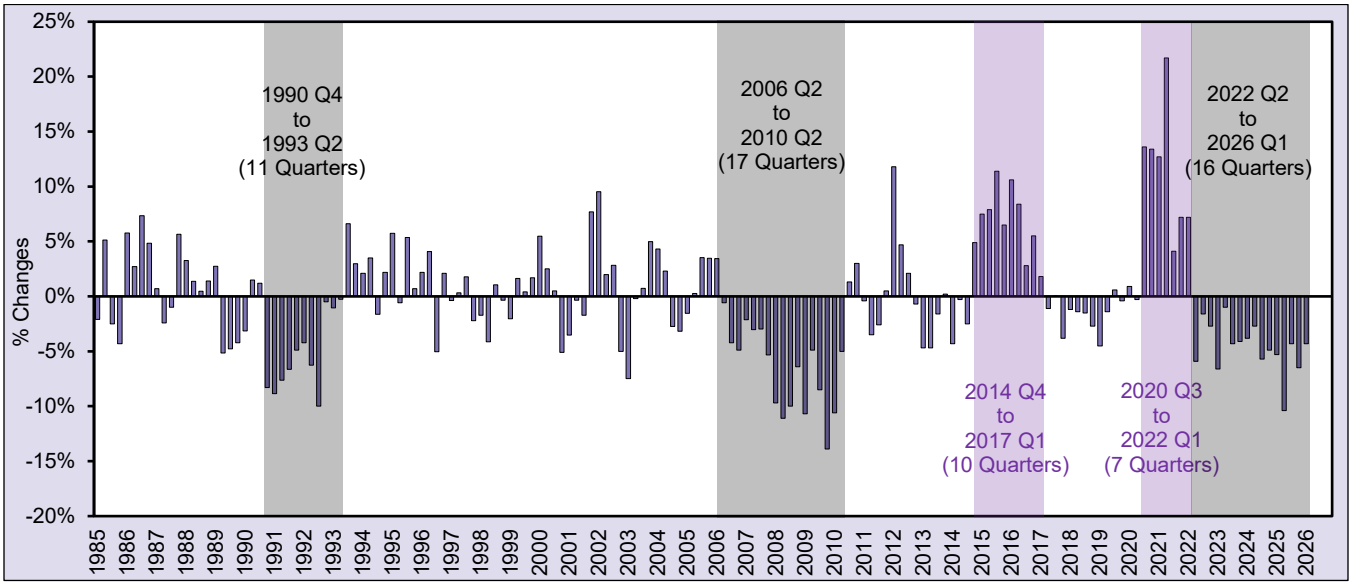
Year	1st Quarter (Jan–Mar)	2nd Quarter (Apr–Jun)	3rd Quarter (Jul–Sep)	4th Quarter (Oct–Dec)	Total (Full Year)
2023	8,916 [-6.6%]	10,386 [-1.0%]	11,137 [-4.3%]	10,586 [-4.1%]	41,025 [-4.0%]
2024	8,574 [-3.8%]	10,107 [-2.7%]	10,505 [-5.7%]	10,068 [-4.9%]	39,254 [-4.3%]
2025†	8,120 [-5.3%]	9,055 [-10.4%]	10,055 [-4.3%]	9,410 [-6.5%]	36,640 [-6.7%]
2026†	7,770 [-4.3%]	-	-	-	-
Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT					
2014	0.99	1.03	1.11	1.17	1.08
2015	1.03	1.08	1.20	1.21	1.15
2016	1.11	1.16	1.23	1.27	1.19
2017	1.12	1.13	1.21	1.20	1.17
2018	1.10	1.11	1.18	1.15	1.14
2019	1.05	1.09	1.18	1.14	1.11
2020	1.08	1.43	1.44	1.42	1.34
2021	1.28	1.38	1.41	1.42	1.38
2022	1.29	1.28	1.38	1.38	1.34
2023	1.18	1.24	1.31	1.32	1.26
2024	1.12	1.19	1.22	1.23	1.19
2025†	1.05	1.05	1.15	1.15	1.10
2026†	0.99	-	-	-	-

†2025 and 2026 statistical projections and rates based on these projections.
Sources: Fatalities: 2014–2023 FARS Final File, 2024 FARS ARF.
VMT: FHWA March 2026 Traffic Volume Trends (TVT) for 2025 and 2026 VMT.

Figure 1 shows the historical trend of the percentage changes every quarter from the same quarter in the previous year, going back to 1985 (NHTSA has fatality data going back to 1975). The shading in the chart shows the years when there were significant numbers of consecutive quarters with increases/declines as compared to the corresponding quarters of the previous years. The declines during the early 1980s and 1990s lasted 11 consecutive quarters (not shown in Figure 1), while the most recent decline occurred over 17 consecutive quarters ending in the second quarter of 2010.

More recently, the significant increases in fatalities occurred over 10 consecutive quarters ending after the first half of 2017. Fatalities also increased 7 consecutive quarters beginning with the third quarter of 2020, until the 5.9-percent decline seen in the second quarter of 2022. The third and fourth quarters of 2020 and the first and especially the second quarters of 2021 showed significant increases in fatalities as compared to the corresponding quarters of 2019 and 2020. The percentage increase in the second quarter of 2021 is the highest quarterly percentage increase in FARS data recorded history, which was in the COVID-19 pandemic period. As shown in the rightmost shading in the chart, the first quarter of 2026 represents the 16th consecutive quarterly decline in fatalities beginning with the second quarter of 2022.

Figure 1. Percentage Changes in Fatalities in Every Quarter Compared to the Fatalities in the Same Quarter During the Previous Year



Sources: 1985–2023 FARS Final File, 2024 FARS ARF, 2025 and 2026 statistical projections.

The quarterly projections of fatalities, fatality rates, and VMT are further split into monthly estimates for 2025 and 2026, as shown in Table 2. In the first quarter of 2026 both fatalities and the fatality rate per 100 million VMT show decreases from January to March, as compared to the corresponding month in 2025.

Table 2. Fatalities, VMT, Fatality Rate by Month or Quarter in 2026, and the Percentage Changes in Fatalities and VMT From the Corresponding Month or Quarter in 2025

Year	1st Quarter				2nd Quarter				3rd Quarter				4th Quarter			
	Jan	Feb*	Mar	Total	Apr	May	Jun	Total	Jul	Aug	Sep	Total	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Fatalities in 2026 and Percentage Change in Fatalities for the Corresponding Month and Quarter From 2025																
2025†	2,690	2,465	2,965	8,120	2,915	3,090	3,050	9,055	3,310	3,520	3,225	10,055	3,405	3,055	2,950	9,410
2026†	2,465 -8.4%	2,385 -3.2%	2,920 -1.5%	7,770 -4.3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT/VMT (in Billion) and Percentage Changes in VMT																
2025†	1.07 252.5	1.03 238.7	1.06 278.8	1.05 770.0	1.05 278.6	1.05 295.2	1.06 286.9	1.05 860.7	1.11 297.2	1.19 295.9	1.15 279.6	1.15 872.7	1.17 291.5	1.16 263.1	1.11 265.9	1.15 820.5
2026†	0.98 252.8 0.1%	0.97 245.1 2.6%	1.03 283.2 1.6%	0.99 781.1 1.4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

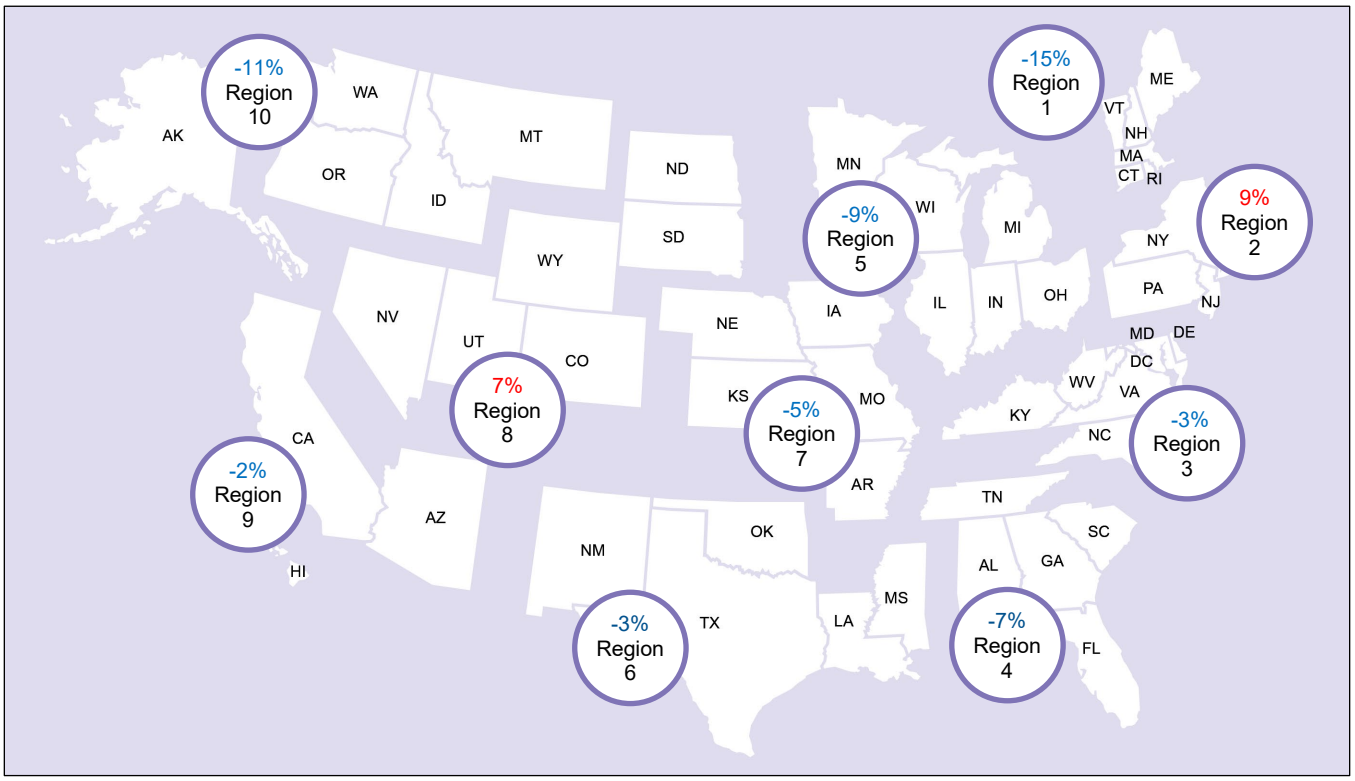
†2025 and 2026 statistical projections and rates based on these projections.
Sources: VMT: FHWA March 2026 TVT for 2025 and 2026 VMT.

Regional Differences

The statistical procedures used in these projections were generated for each NHTSA administrative region and were collated to create the national estimate. This allows for the comparison of regional estimates in 2026 with the projected 2025 counts (note that Connecticut was moved from Region 2 to Region 1 in 2024). Figure 2 shows the percentage changes in estimated fatalities in the first quarter of 2026 from the projected fatalities in the same quarter of 2025 by NHTSA region; 8 of the 10 regions experienced decreases. Figure 3 shows the comparison of the estimated fatality rate per 100 million VMT in the first quarter of 2026 with the projected fatality rate per 100 million VMT in the same quarter of 2025, by NHTSA region; 8 of the 10 regions presented decreases. These

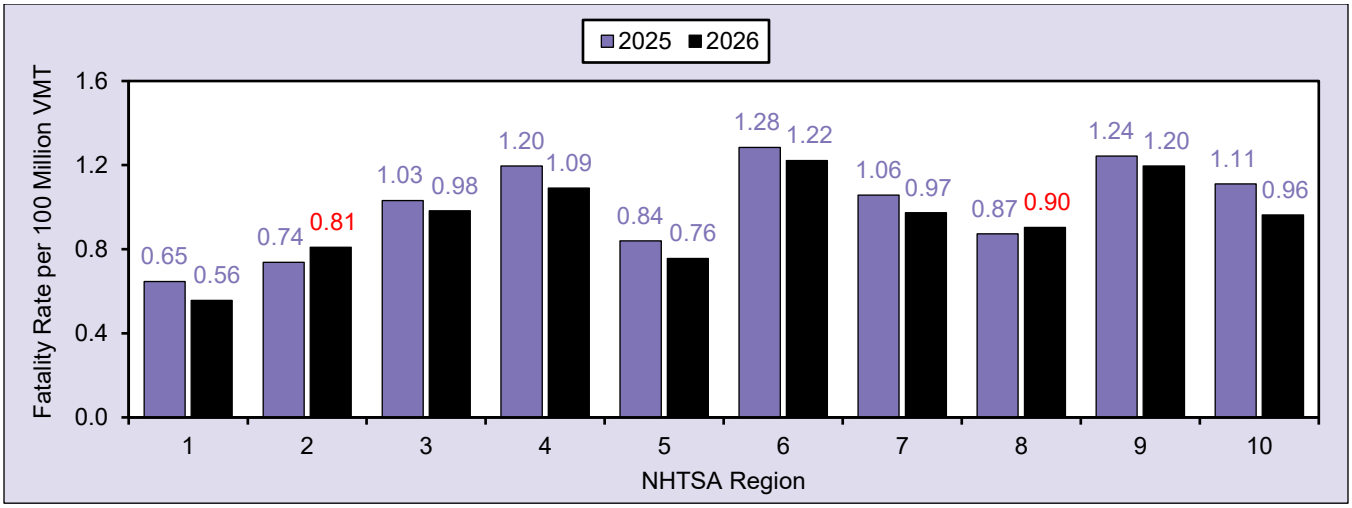
estimates by NHTSA region shown in Figures 2 and 3 are subject to small changes as the FARS fatality counts for 2025 and 2026 are reported.

Figure 2. Percentage Changes in Estimated Fatalities in the First Quarter of 2026 From Estimated Fatality Counts in the Same Quarter of 2025, by NHTSA Region



Sources: 2025 and 2026 statistical projections. Puerto Rico is not included in Region 2.

Figure 3. Comparison of Estimated Fatality Rates in the First Quarter of 2026 With Estimated Fatality Rate in the Same Quarter of 2025, by NHTSA Region



Source: FHWA March 2026 TVT for 2025 and 2026 VMT. Puerto Rico is not included in Region 2.

State Differences

Given the significant interest in the traffic safety community in estimated changes at the State level to assess emerging trends, NHTSA has developed a methodology in the third quarter of 2022 to generate such State-level estimates based on the most recent distribution of the fatalities by State in a NHTSA Region and the month (see *Data and Methodology* section for more details). Table 3 shows the comparison of each State's estimate in the first quarter of 2026 with the projected fatality counts in the same quarter of 2025 and the percentage change in 2026 from 2025; 30 States and Puerto Rico are projected to have experienced decreases in fatalities in the first quarter of 2026 compared to the same quarter of 2025, while 2 States remained unchanged, and 18 States and District of Columbia are projected to have had increases in fatalities. Also, the estimates of the fatality rates per 100 million VMT by State in the first quarter of 2025 and 2026 are presented in Table 3 of this report. These estimates by State shown in Table 3 are subject to change slightly as fatality counts in FARS for 2025 and 2026 are reported, and as FHWA finalizes the State VMT estimates for 2025 and 2026.

Table 3. Estimated Fatalities in the First Quarter of 2026, and the Percentage Change in Estimated Fatalities From the Projected Fatalities in the Same Quarter of 2025, by State. The States' Estimates of the Fatality Rate per 100 Million VMT in the First Quarter of 2025 and 2026 Are Also Presented

State	Fatalities			Fatality Rate		State	Fatalities			Fatality Rate	
	2025	2026	Percent Change	2025	2026		2025	2026	Percent Change	2025	2026
Alabama	190	190	0.0%	1.10	1.06	Nebraska	47	54	+14.9%	0.97	1.06
Alaska	14	5	-64.3%	1.04	0.38	Nevada	100	79	-21.0%	1.48	1.13
Arizona	282	277	-1.8%	1.59	1.55	New Hampshire	17	17	0.0%	0.56	0.56
Arkansas	112	100	-10.7%	1.23	1.08	New Jersey	117	124	+6.0%	0.64	0.69
California	920	912	-0.9%	1.16	1.13	New Mexico	105	103	-1.9%	1.59	1.54
Colorado	115	126	+9.6%	0.88	0.94	New York	192	183	-4.7%	0.73	0.70
Connecticut	51	37	-27.5%	0.70	0.51	North Carolina	333	339	+1.8%	1.12	1.12
Delaware	18	22	+22.2%	0.82	1.01	North Dakota	12	20	+66.7%	0.52	0.88
D.C.	3	8	+166.7%	0.35	0.97	Ohio	201	226	+12.4%	0.77	0.86
Florida	784	706	-9.9%	1.22	1.09	Oklahoma	155	110	-29.0%	1.43	0.96
Georgia	295	287	-2.7%	1.00	0.96	Oregon	99	100	+1.0%	1.17	1.15
Hawaii	36	19	-47.2%	1.35	0.73	Pennsylvania	178	223	+25.3%	0.84	1.04
Idaho	39	45	+15.4%	0.87	0.97	Rhode Island	7	11	+57.1%	0.39	0.62
Illinois	264	193	-26.9%	1.10	0.80	South Carolina	215	201	-6.5%	1.46	1.33
Indiana	169	178	+5.3%	0.84	0.88	South Dakota	20	24	+20.0%	0.89	1.02
Iowa	51	67	+31.4%	0.70	0.88	Tennessee	243	216	-11.1%	1.31	1.15
Kansas	83	69	-16.9%	1.19	0.93	Texas	921	909	-1.3%	1.22	1.19
Kentucky	148	143	-3.4%	1.36	1.28	Utah	38	49	+28.9%	0.44	0.55
Louisiana	185	159	-14.1%	1.40	1.17	Vermont	13	10	-23.1%	0.80	0.61
Maine	37	28	-24.3%	1.17	0.88	Virginia	188	180	-4.3%	0.92	0.87
Maryland	95	81	-14.7%	0.74	0.63	Washington	148	109	-26.4%	1.11	0.81
Massachusetts	75	68	-9.3%	0.54	0.49	West Virginia	48	32	-33.3%	1.23	0.80
Michigan	198	181	-8.6%	0.90	0.82	Wisconsin	114	79	-30.7%	0.75	0.51
Minnesota	64	62	-3.1%	0.49	0.47	Wyoming	21	28	+33.3%	1.05	1.33
Mississippi	123	161	+30.9%	1.25	1.60	**U.S. Total***	**8,120**	**7,770**	**-4.3%**	**1.05**	**0.99**
Missouri	199	179	-10.1%	1.09	0.95	Puerto Rico	80	60	-25.0%	–	–
Montana	38	41	+7.9%	1.33	1.36						

*Puerto Rico is not included.
Sources: 2025 and 2026 statistical projections.
VMT: FHWA March 2026 TVT for 2025 and 2026 VMT. Traffic Volume Trends for Puerto Rico are not available.

Discussion

During the COVID-19 pandemic there were marked increases in fatalities and the fatality rates per 100 million VMT in 2020. The increased trend of fatalities in 2020 continued into 2021 and the first quarter of 2022. However, the second, third, and fourth quarters of 2022, all four quarters of 2023, 2024, and 2025, plus the first quarter of 2026, represent the 16 consecutive quarterly declines in fatalities after 7 consecutive quarters of year-to-year increases in fatalities, since the third quarter of 2020. The increased trend of the fatality rates per 100 million VMT in 2020 continued into the first quarter of 2021, decreased in the second and third quarters of 2021, and increased again in the first quarter of 2022. The second, third, and fourth quarters of 2022, all four quarters of 2023, 2024, and 2025, plus the first quarter of 2026, also represent the 16 consecutive quarterly declines in fatality rates per 100 million VMT. NHTSA is continuing to gather and finalize data on crash fatalities for 2026 using information from police crash reports and other sources. The FARS ARF and the Final File for 2025 as well as the ARF for 2026 will be available within the next 2 years and usually result in the minor revision of fatality totals and the ensuing fatality rates and percentage changes.

Data and Methodology

The data used in this analysis comes from several sources: NHTSA's FARS, Early Notification (EN) data, and Monthly Fatality Counts (MFC) (the EN and MFC data are not available to the public); 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 2003 to 2023 and the FARS Annual Report File in 2024 are used to obtain the monthly fatality counts. The EN program is designed as an Early Fatality Notification System to capture fatality counts from States more rapidly and provide near-real-time notification of fatality counts from all jurisdictions reporting to FARS. The MFC data provide monthly fatality counts by State through sources that are independent from the EN or FARS systems. MFCs from January 2003 up to March 2026 are used. MFCs are reported midmonth for all prior months of the year. To estimate the traffic fatality counts for the first quarter of 2026, the time series cross-section regression procedure 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 EN, the details of which are available in a Research Note, *Statistical Methodology to Make Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities* (Report No. DOT HS 811 123). Furthermore, after the projected fatality counts for NHTSA Region r and the month m (F_Est_{mr}) are obtained, the estimated fatality counts for a State st in Region r and the month m ($F\_Est_{st|mr}$) are calculated. Each State receives a proportion of the projected fatality counts for the Region using the most recent relative proportion of fatalities in each State st for Region r and month m found in the EN data. This can be expressed as $F\_Est_{st|mr} = (F_{st|mr} / \sum_{all\ States\ in\ r} F_{st|mr}) \times F\_Est_{mr}$, where $F_{st|mr}$ is the latest fatal count in the EN data for State st in Region r and month m. That is, the inflation rate for all States within a Region is assumed to be the same as the inflation rate of that Region. For example, the estimated motor vehicle traffic fatalities for Arizona in Region 9 (Arizona, California, Hawaii) and the month m is: $F\_Est_{AZ|m9} = (F_{AZ|m9} / (F_{AZ|m9} + F_{CA|m9} + F_{HI|m9})) \times F\_Est_{m9}$.

The methodology used to generate the national, regional, and State-level estimates for the first quarter of 2026 is the same as NHTSA used to project the motor vehicle traffic fatalities for 2025 in *Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate in 2025* (Report No. DOT HS 813 800).

The suggested APA format citation for this report is:

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