

More than 200,000 crashes caused by road debris

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THE GROWING DANGER OF DEBRIS ON U.S. ROADS

MORE THAN 200,000 CRASHES involved debris on U.S. roadways over the past four years.

For more road safety tips, visit AAA.com/PreventRoadDebris



The infographic features a blue header with the title 'THE GROWING DANGER OF DEBRIS ON U.S. ROADS' in yellow, bold, block letters. Below the header is a dark blue pickup truck on a road, with a white rectangular object flying through the air towards it. The lower section has a light gray background with the text 'MORE THAN 200,000 CRASHES' in blue, followed by 'involved debris on U.S. roadways over the past four years.' in black. To the right is a dark blue sedan with a blue circular object flying towards it. At the bottom right is the AAA logo.

Credit: AAA


More than 200,000 crashes involved debris on U.S. roadways during the past four years, according to a new study released by the American Automobile Association (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety. Road debris has resulted in approximately 39,000 injuries and more than 500 deaths between 2011 and 2014. AAA is calling for drivers to properly secure their loads to prevent dangerous debris.

AAA researchers examined common characteristics of crashes involving road debris and found that:

- Nearly 37 percent of all deaths in road debris crashes resulted from the driver swerving to avoid hitting an object. Overcorrecting at the last minute to avoid debris can increase a driver's risk of losing control of their [vehicle](#) and make a bad situation worse.
- More than one in three crashes involving debris occur between 10:00 a.m. and 3:59 p.m., a time when many people are on the road hauling or moving heavy items like furniture or construction equipment.
- Debris-related crashes are much more likely to occur on Interstate highways. Driving at high speeds increases the risk for vehicle parts to become detached or cargo to fall onto the roadway.

"This new report shows that road debris can be extremely dangerous but all of these crashes are preventable," said Jurek Grabowski, research director for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "Drivers can easily save lives and prevent injuries by securing their loads and taking other simple precautions to prevent items from falling off the vehicle."

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Debris-related crashes have resulted in **APPROXIMATELY 39,000 INJURIES AND MORE THAN 500 DEATHS** from 2011 to 2014.

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Credit: AAA

About two-thirds of debris-related crashes are the result of items falling from a vehicle due to improper maintenance and unsecured loads. Crashes involving vehicle related-debris increased 40 percent since 2001, when the Foundation first studied the issue. The most common types of vehicle debris are:

- Parts becoming detached from a vehicle (tires, wheels, etc.) and falling onto the roadway

- Unsecured cargo like furniture, appliances and other items falling onto the roadway
- Tow trailers becoming separated and hitting another vehicle or landing on the roadway

Drivers can decrease their chances of being involved in a road debris crash by:

- **Maintaining Their Vehicles:** Drivers should have their vehicles checked regularly by trained mechanics. Badly worn or underinflated tires often suffer blowouts that can leave pieces of tire on the roadway. Exhaust systems and the hardware that attach to the vehicle can also rust and corrode, causing mufflers and other parts to drag and eventually break loose. Potential tire and exhaust system problems can easily be spotted by trained mechanics as part of the routine maintenance performed during every oil change.
- **Securing Vehicle Loads:** When moving or towing furniture, it is important to make sure all items are secured. To properly secure a load, drivers should:
 - 1. Tie down load with rope, netting or straps
 - 2. Tie large objects directly to the vehicle or trailer
 - 3. Cover the entire load with a sturdy tarp or netting
 - 4. Don't overload the vehicle
 - 5. Always double check load to make sure a load is secure

"Drivers have a much bigger responsibility when it comes to preventing debris on the roads than most realize," said Jennifer Ryan, director of state relations for AAA. "It's important for drivers to know that many states have hefty fines and penalties for drivers who drop items from their vehicle onto the roadway, and in some cases states impose jail time."

Currently every state has laws that make it illegal for items to fall from a vehicle while on the road. Most states' penalties result in fines ranging from \$10-\$5,000, with at least 16 states listing jail as a possible punishment for offenders. AAA encourages drivers to educate themselves about specific road debris laws in their state. Drivers should also practice defensive driving techniques while on the road to prevent debris related crashes from occurring.

"Continually searching the road at least 12 to 15 seconds ahead can help drivers be prepared in the case of debris," said William Van Tassel, Manager of Driver Training Programs for AAA. "Always try to maintain open space on at least one side of your vehicle in case you need to steer around an object. If you see you are unable to avoid [debris](#) on the roadway, safely reduce your speed as much as possible before making contact."

AAA also recommends that drivers avoid tailgating and remain alert while on the road.

More information: Additional tips on defensive driving and how to report road debris to the proper authorities are available online at AAA.com/PreventRoadDebris.

Provided by American Automobile Association

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