

US pedestrian deaths surged to record levels in 2016

March 30 2017



(HealthDay)—For the second straight year, U.S. pedestrian deaths are

setting alarming new records.

The number of pedestrians killed on U.S. roads rose a projected 11 percent between 2015 and 2016, the largest year-to-year increase on record, according to a new Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) [report](#).

During the first six months of 2016, preliminary data show 2,660 pedestrian deaths nationwide, compared to 2,486 for the same period during 2015. The year-long projection is based on those numbers. The report also projects a 22 percent rise in pedestrian deaths from 2014.

Both estimates are sharply higher than the 9 percent increase in pedestrian deaths between 2014 and 2015.

"This is the second year in a row that we have seen unprecedented increases in pedestrian fatalities, which is both sad and alarming," said report author Richard Retting, who's with Sam Schwartz Transportation Consultants.

"It is critical that the [highway safety](#) community understand these disturbing statistics and work to aggressively implement effective countermeasures," he added in a GHSA news release.

Pedestrians account for about 15 percent of U.S. road deaths.

In the first six months of 2016, the number of pedestrian deaths rose in 34 states, fell in 15 states and in the District of Columbia, and remained the same in one state.

The report cited several possible reasons for the spike. They include Americans driving more due to lower gas prices; more people choosing to walk for health, transportation, economic or environmental reasons;

and widespread use of smartphones, a distraction for walkers and drivers alike.

"Everyone walks, and we want to encourage that, but at the same time we want to make sure that we all get to our destinations safely," GHSA Executive Director Jonathan Adkins said.

"Unfortunately, this latest data shows that the U.S. is not meeting the mark on keeping pedestrians safe on our roadways. Every one of these lives represents a loved one not coming home tonight, which is absolutely unacceptable," he said.

One doctors' group added that prevention— keeping your eyes and ears on your surroundings— is key.

"Today's projected [pedestrian](#) fatalities—the highest ever recorded—are an urgent wake-up call that we need to work harder at consistently focusing on where and how we are walking," said Dr. Alan Hilibrand. He's a spokesman for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

"Pedestrians need to be mindful of their surroundings," while walking, Hilibrand said. "Walking while looking at your phone or an electronic device can result in sprains, broken bones, and other serious, even fatal, injuries."

More information: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration offers [pedestrian safety advice](#).

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Citation: US pedestrian deaths surged to record levels in 2016 (2017, March 30) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-03-pedestrian-deaths-surged.html>

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