

Oklahoma Ranked Among Top 10 Most Dangerous States For Driving

Attorneys explain why numbers are so high for Sooner State

Oklahoma recently ranked among the top 10 most dangerous states to drive in nationwide, according to the most up-to-date statistics compiled by the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#) and the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety \(IIHS\)](#).

Why do so many accidents happen in Oklahoma? What are the common causes of crashes? And is the problem getting worse? Our Oklahoma attorneys researched these questions and found the answers, along with helpful hints on how to stay safe on the road across Oklahoma.

How many fatal accidents occurred in Oklahoma?

Each year, the NHTSA compiles accident statistics nationwide and for each state. These statistics include the number of people killed in motor vehicle accidents, as well as what type of crash they were involved in.

Recently, the NHTSA released its findings for 2018. Based on an IIHS analysis of those statistics, [Oklahoma is the 8th most dangerous state in the country for drivers](#). The IIHS analysis cited several statistics for Oklahoma from 2018 in its findings:

- Fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles – 1.44
- Total motor vehicle fatalities – 655

The IIHS analysis of Oklahoma's 2018 statistics also included which types of vehicles were involved in fatal accidents. Cars were the most common vehicle at 40.1 percent, followed by small trucks (37.5 percent), motorcycles (15.9 percent) and large trucks (5.2 percent).

Are Oklahoma's roads getting more dangerous?

Based on annual accident statistics for Oklahoma, the numbers for 2018 were about the same or worse than some previous years. Traffic fatalities for previous years in Oklahoma according to the [NHTSA](#) were:

- 645 fatalities in 2015
- 687 fatalities in 2016
- 657 fatalities in 2017

As for whether fatal crashes are more or less in common Oklahoma, that depends on where people live in the state. The number of fatalities has increased on rural roads in Oklahoma since 2015. Specifically, fatalities on rural roads increased by 9.7 percent from 2015-2018. In contrast, the number of fatal accidents in urban areas decreased by 11.4 percent statewide during the same time period.

ANNUAL TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN OKLAHOMA BY REGION

	RURAL	URBAN
2015	391	254
2016	426	260

2017	417	240
2018	429	225

What are common cause of crashes?

Accidents happen for many different reasons, but certain causes are more common than others. Specifically, drunk driving and speeding are among the most common causes of crashes in Oklahoma.

In 2018, speeding was a factor in 22.4 percent of fatal accidents, according to the IIHS analysis. Specifically, 147 people died in crashes caused by speeding drivers in Oklahoma. The year before, 143 people died in speeding accidents statewide, according to the NHTSA.

As for drunk driving, drivers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) over .08 (which is the legal limit) were responsible for 22.1 percent of fatal crashes statewide in 2018. That works out to 145 fatalities that year due to drunk drivers. The year before, 161 people died statewide due to crashes caused by drunk drivers, according to the NHTSA.

“This clearly demonstrates that drinking and driving is still a problem in this state,” Paul Harris, Director of the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office, wrote in the latest, in-depth traffic analysis of accidents in Oklahoma conducted by the [NHTSA and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation](#).

In addition, like many other states, distracted driving has increasingly become a common cause of accidents in Oklahoma. According to the same in-depth traffic analysis of accidents in Oklahoma, distracted driving was a factor in 1,335 accidents statewide in 2017. In particular, younger drivers 16 to 24 years old were “over represented in distracted driving injury crashes,” officials noted in the same statewide study. Specifically, 464 younger drivers caused serious or fatal accidents due to distracted driving in 2017.

What can be done to make Oklahoma’s roads safer?

Opinions vary on what can be done to reduce the number of accidents on Oklahoma’s roads. However, based on a statistical analysis of where and why accidents happen in the state, certain measures may help reduce the number of crashes statewide:

- **Observe posted speed limits** – Speeding drivers cause more than 1 in 5 fatal accidents statewide. Based on these figures, drivers may reduce the number of crashes if they drove slower, especially in rural areas. This is especially true in work zones, where drivers traveling at an unsafe speed caused many fatal crashes, according to a study conducted by the [Oklahoma Department of Transportation](#).
- **Drive sober and enforce drunk driving laws** – Drunk driving played a role in 1 out of 5 fatal crashes in Oklahoma in 2018. As a result, state traffic safety officials recommended in the state’s [2019 highway safety plan](#) increased “enforcement of impaired driving laws.” If drivers were not impaired and did not cause fatal crashes, that could potentially save 32 lives each year statewide based on statewide statistics for 2018.
- **Eliminate distracted driving** – As noted in the in-depth statewide analysis of motor vehicle accidents for 2017, distracted driving (including texting while driving or talking on a cellphone while driving) continues to be a common cause of crashes. Driver

inattention is also a common cause of crashes in work zones. As a result, more clearly needs to be done to encourage drivers to focus on driving and educate them about the dangers of distracted driving, especially among younger drivers.

If you or a family member has been injured in a car accident in Oklahoma, make sure you fully understand your rights. Talk to an experienced lawyer at Lawter & Associates, Attorneys at Law. [Contact us](#) and schedule a [free case evaluation](#). We can answer your questions and explain your legal options. Our law firm has offices in Oklahoma City and Tulsa and represents injury victims and their families statewide.