

Directions in Highway Safety

June 2020

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Reckless Driving Soars During COVID-19 Pandemic

AS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN sheltering in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, traffic on U.S. roadways has dropped to unprecedented levels. That's generated some unexpected benefits for motorists — lower gas prices, rebates on auto insurance premiums and reduced travel times. But some motorists are taking advantage of the latter to drive faster — much faster, according to law enforcement officials across the country. While

police are issuing citations to motorists traveling 20, 30 and even 40 mph over the posted limit, they're also clocking drivers going 100 mph or more.

These reports prompted GHS to issue a [news release](#) in mid-April, calling attention to this alarming increase in speeding. State Highway Safety Offices, meanwhile, began pleading with motorists to slow down and respect traffic safety laws.

Story continues on page 2



Reckless Driving Soars During COVID-19 Pandemic (Cont'd)



The pandemic's long-term effect on traffic safety is unknown. As the country reopens, there are concerns about more people opting to drive rather than use mass transit or ride-sharing.

Some states have reported fewer crashes and serious injuries/fatalities, such as California, where an analysis of highway patrol data found declines of 50%. But in Minnesota and Massachusetts, crashes and fatalities have more than doubled compared to the same time period last year, with many of those deaths the result of speeding. And this risky behavior isn't just endangering motorists; in Nevada and Rhode Island, pedestrian fatalities are rising.

Since the start of the outbreak, walking and biking have increased nationwide as people have sought opportunities to get outdoors. That's prompted some cities to close streets to cars so that pedestrians and bicyclists can practice social distancing. For other cities, these modes are an alternative to mass transit,

which has experienced a 73% decline in ridership. Ride-sharing and micromobility systems (i.e., bike share, e-scooters) also have been impacted by COVID-19, with some shutting down entirely.

The pandemic's long-term effect on traffic safety is unknown. As the country reopens, there are concerns about more people opt-

ing to drive rather than use mass transit or ride-sharing. Research conducted by IBM found that 45% of regular transit users would either no longer ride their local system or do so less often, while 50% of ride-share users would access the service less or stop altogether. What impact will this have on impaired driving?

Walking and bicycling advocates are hopeful that the uptick in active transportation will result in more sidewalks and bike lanes, not to mention more car-free streets. Seattle closed 20 miles of streets to motor vehicles in April and is the first American city to commit to a permanent closure. Will others follow? And, if so, will that result in fewer injuries and fatalities due to a safety in numbers effect?

Finally, as traffic volumes increase, what impact will this have on motor vehicle speeds? If there is a "carnageddon" on U.S. roadways, as some are predicting, motorists may find themselves traveling well below the posted speed limit.





Jonathan Adkins
Executive Director

Report from the Executive Director

To help secure regulatory certainty, GHSA successfully collaborated with Congress and NHTSA to authorize new flexibilities in highway safety program requirements.

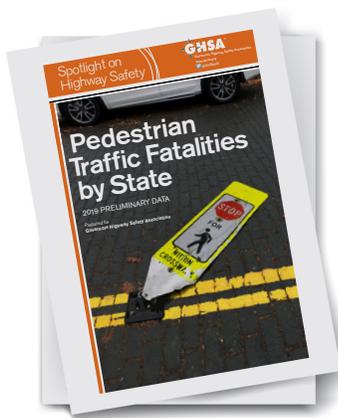
I HOPE EVERYONE IS WELL AS many of us continue to work remotely and shelter from home. It's been a trying time on many fronts. One such example is that in the traffic safety community, we've watched reckless driving increase while traffic decreased.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that many states have had to navigate unexpected and unprecedented changes. Traffic enforcement mobilizations and many other highway safety programs have been altered, postponed or canceled. To help secure regulatory certainty, GHSA successfully collaborated with Congress and NHTSA to authorize new flexibilities in highway safety program requirements. Rather than agonize over regulatory compliance, NHTSA and the states can now better focus on pressing highway safety challenges.

Meanwhile, the current federal transportation reauthorization, the FAST Act, expires on September 30. Though much congressional activity has slowed, work on reauthorization has continued behind the scenes, with GHSA input.

Like many of our small-business and nonprofit colleagues, GHSA has taken advantage of the opportunity to secure a low-interest loan from the [Paycheck Protection Program \(PPP\)](#), a federal program that helps businesses keep their workforce employed during the COVID-19 crisis.

In February, we published a new [spotlight report on pedestrian fatalities](#). Learn more about this publication on [page 4](#).



In mid-April, we distributed a [news release](#) about the alarming nationwide surge in speeding during the coronavirus pandemic. The release garnered substantial nationwide press coverage, with stories in [ABC News](#), [CBS This Morning](#), [CNN](#), [Fox News](#),

[NBC's Today Show](#), the [Wall Street Journal](#), the [Washington Post](#) and many more.

On May 21, we held our most popular webinar to date, ["Impaired Driving in a Post-COVID-19 World,"](#) with more than 550 participants. Thank you all for joining us in this important discussion regarding a potential spike in impaired driving once states begin to reopen.

The [Ford Driving Skills for Life](#) Teen Safe Driving Grants, which are offered by GHSA to states to augment their teen safety efforts, are being delayed until 2021.

Lastly, I would like to welcome GHSA's newest team member: [Brittany Holbert](#), Administrative Assistant. Brittany officially started on March 11 and is responsible for providing a host of duties, including administrative support for Russ Martin and me as well as managing GHSA's database entry and management. I hope you will have an opportunity to work with her.

Please stay healthy and safe!

GHSA Welcomes New Associate Members

The GHSA Board recently approved seven new Associate Members:

- **Burg Simpson Eldredge Hersh & Jardine, P.C.**
- **Gonzales Law Offices**
- **Hecht, Kleeger & Damashek**
- **Ornoz & Ericsson Injury Lawyers**
- **ADEPT Driver**
- **Verra Mobility**
- **Westat**

Thank you for your support of GHSA!

From Washington



The number of pedestrian fatalities involving SUVs increased by 81% from 2009 to 2018 – a faster rate than passenger cars, which increased by 53%.

New Pedestrian Report Predicts 30-Year High in Pedestrian Deaths

ON FEB. 27, GHSA RELEASED A NEW SPOTLIGHT REPORT, "[Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2019 Preliminary Data.](#)"

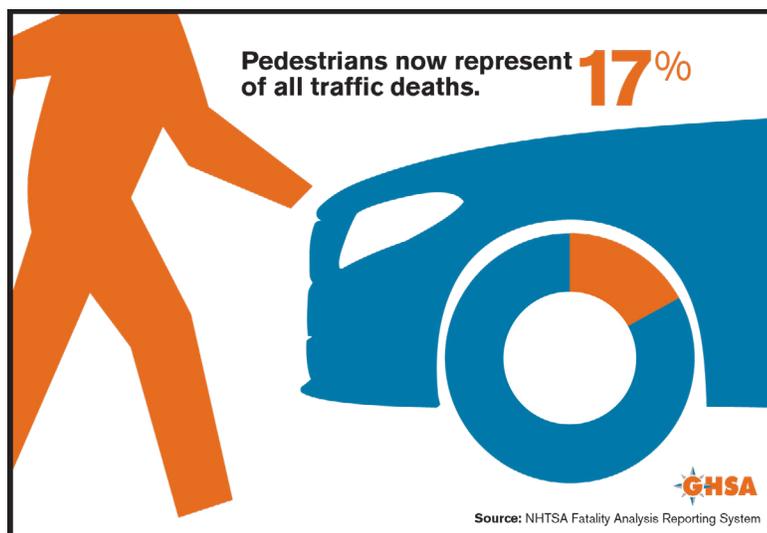
While overall traffic deaths are going down, pedestrian deaths are rising sharply. The report estimates that the nationwide number of pedestrians killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2019 was 6,590, an increase of approximately 300 deaths, or 5%, from 2018.

The 6,590 projected pedestrian fatalities for 2019 would be the largest annual number of pedestrian fatalities in the U.S. since 1988. This increasing trend in pedestrian deaths goes back to 2009.

Here are some other key takeaways from the report:

- Five states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia and Texas) accounted for almost half (47%) of all pedestrian deaths. The warmer climate in these states could be a contributing factor.
- The number of pedestrian fatalities involving SUVs increased by 81% from 2009 to 2018 – a faster rate than passenger cars, which increased by 53%. Further, pedestrians struck by a large SUV are twice as likely to die as those struck by a car.

To combat this alarming rise in pedestrian fatalities, the report calls for reduced speed limits, design changes in SUVs to lessen injuries and fatalities, and an increased law-enforcement focus on speeding, impaired driving and distracted driving.



NHTSA Promotes Recall Awareness

NHTSA HAS ANNOUNCED A [new federal grant opportunity](#) for states to promote recall awareness. The agency will make \$1.5 million available for up to six states to launch two-year programs to notify drivers of open recalls during vehicle registration.

Unrepaired vehicles subject to recall remain an ongoing highway safety challenge. One in five vehicles on the road today has an unrepaired safety recall. Mitigating dangerous vehicle defects depends not only on identifying safety issues, but also convincing motorists to take action to get repairs performed.

GHSA has an existing partnership with the National Safety Council (NSC) to collaborate with law enforcement to encourage drivers to use CheckToProtect.org to check a vehicle's recall status (see [page 8](#)). This new grant opportunity could help expand these efforts. For more information on applying for this new federal grant, click [here](#).

From Washington



Students Promote Traffic Safety Through FACTS Program

Ford Driving Skills for Life (Ford DSFL) and GHSA partnered with **Family, Career and Community Leaders of America** (FCCLA) to hold the annual Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety (FACTS) program, a national FCCLA peer education program through which students strive to save lives through personal, vehicle and road safety. Teens work to educate adults and youth about traffic safety and support enforcement of local rules and regulations regarding community traffic safety.

A total of 136 FCCLA chapters in 19 states surveyed local schools to identify the most important traffic safety topics. Schools then created safety projects and submitted their applications for a chance to win.

Once State Highway Safety Office representatives chose their top projects, FCCLA's National Executive Council evaluated those projects to select the Top 3 national program award winners, who will be recognized at FCCLA's Virtual

National Leadership Conference in early July.

Here are the national winners and the runner-up:

- **Black River High School** (Ohio) – The “Just Drive” campaign included a school assembly with before- and after-school seat belt checks and student-led safe driving stations.
- **Granville Middle School** (Ohio) – The “Arrive Alive” campaign raised distracted driving awareness through signage and digital messaging.
- Runner-Up: **Howells-Dodge High School** (Nebraska) – The “Safety

Starts with You!” campaign focused on seat belt safety and preventing distracted and impaired driving.

The FACTS program this year reached a total of over 680,000 students and adults through school projects and safety messaging.



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Top GHSA Tweets

NOTE TO MEDIA: When writing about traffic safety, please use the term “crash,” not “accident.” It’s more accurate. “Accident” suggests something unforeseen & that no one is to blame. Motor vehicle crashes are predictable results of specific actions. [#CrashNotAccident](#) [#DriveSafe](#)

New [@NHTSAgov](#) research using SHRP2 data – the largest naturalistic driving study to date – demonstrates how pervasive [#speeding](#) is: 99.8% of drivers observed in 2010-2013 drove over 10 mph above the posted speed limit at least once per trip: <https://bit.ly/351Vubf>

Today marks the start of National Work Zone Awareness Week. With the surge of speeding due to reduced traffic volumes resulting from [#COVID19](#) stay-at-home orders, we need to make sure to protect those in our roadway’s work zones: <https://bit.ly/2RLFNjf> [@aashtospeaks](#)

DID YOU KNOW?



Associate Member Profile: U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association

The U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association (USTMA) is the national trade association representing the tire manufacturing industry, which operates facilities in 17 states, employs more than 100,000 workers and generates annual sales of more than \$27 billion. In early 2019, USTMA issued a [sustainability report](#) highlighting its members' collective accomplishments, such as the development of sensors embedded in the tread groove to provide motorists with real-time information about their tire temperature, pressure and tread wear. Recognizing that tires are the only part of a vehicle touching the road, USTMA members have invested billions in improving tires so they're safer and more sustainable than just a few decades ago.

"The U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association is honored to be a GHSA Associate Member and support the association's mission and important work," said USTMA President & CEO Anne Forristall Luke. "USTMA embraces the shared goal of improved safety and zero deaths on America's roadways. We also appreciate GHSA's ongoing support for USTMA's National Tire Safety Week, an annual initiative that educates drivers about tire safety and underscores the critical role tires play in prioritizing safety on the road. As partners, our associations strengthen our ability to advocate for meaningful safety issues to protect American motorists."

GHSA thanks USTMA for being an Associate Member and encourages SHSOs to visit its website to learn more about USTMA's [safety focus](#).



Teens Are Most Susceptible to Distracted Driving

ACCORDING TO A NEW NATIONAL Highway Traffic Safety Administration [fact sheet](#) addressing distracted driving among teens ages 15 to 19, 8% of teen drivers who were involved in fatal crashes in 2018 were distracted at the time of the crash. That's the largest proportion of any age group. Slightly more than half of those killed in teen distraction-affected crashes (53%) were teens, which points to the impact this age group has on all road users.

There is some good news, however. The number of distracted teen drivers (271) involved in fatal crashes in 2018 decreased 12.5% from the previous year, while people killed (256) in crashes involving distracted teen drivers dropped 13.8%. The number of 15-to-19-year-olds (229) killed in these crashes also fell 11.8%.

Teens' inexperience behind the wheel makes them more susceptible to distracted driving. And while 1 in 3 say they've texted while driving, teens are also easily distracted by passengers (especially when they're the teens' peers), eating and drinking, applying makeup, daydreaming and any other task that takes their eyes and mind off the road.

State of the States



Teen Driver Training Takes the Field in Anaheim

IN FEBRUARY, FORD DRIVING Skills For Life (Ford DSFL) and partners including the California Highway Patrol, the Anaheim Police Department, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) took their national teen driver training tour to Angels Stadium in Anaheim, Calif., for another hands-on training event to help young drivers improve their skills in key traffic safety areas. The focus of this event was on hazardous weather recognition, with program participants learning safe ways to drive in conditions including rain, snow and ice.

Throughout the weekend-long event, which was kicked off by California Office of Traffic Safety Director Barbara L. Rooney (pictured above), nearly 700 teens and parents received onsite training.

Interested in learning more about Ford DSFL? Visit the [Ford DSFL website](#) for more details.

States Address Driving Tests Affected by COVID-19

STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY have modified their road test requirements to obtain driver's licenses in response to the coronavirus pandemic. In Georgia, Gov. Brian Kemp suspended the road test requirement for most Georgians through an executive order, allowing nearly 20,000 teens to upgrade their permit to a provisional driver's license. Gov. Kemp later clarified through a second executive order that all Georgians who received the upgrade will still need to take a road test by Sept. 30 to keep their licenses.

States including Texas and Wisconsin have also modified their procedures to temporarily



waive the in-person road test. Other states, however, have not followed suit. As an example, in California, in-person road tests remain on hold until offices are reopened, and New Jersey is not currently considering granting driver's licenses without an in-person test.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 3,370 people were killed in crashes involving drivers aged 15 to 19 in 2018.



Final Warning: Massachusetts' Hands-Free Driving Law Officially Takes Effect

ON NOV. 25, 2019, MASSACHUSETTS Gov. Charlie Baker signed legislation passing the state's [hands-free driving law](#), allowing

drivers to use electronic devices only in hands-free modes. The legislation did not take effect until Feb. 23, and when it did, it came with a grace period in the enforcement of the law, with police issuing warnings instead of fines to allow drivers to get used to the new law until March 31.

As of April 1, that grace period has ended. Punishment for violating the law includes a \$100 fine for a first offense, a \$250 fine for a second offense and a \$500 fine for a third or subsequent offense. All drivers who receive a first offense are required to take an educational course about distracted driving prevention.

from our perspective



There are more than 50 million vehicles on the road today with unrepaired safety recalls.

Check To Protect

Kelly Nantel
Vice President, Roadway Practice
National Safety Council

THE PAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BROUGHT SO MUCH UNCERTAINTY into our lives. When it comes to vehicle safety, though, we still have a great deal of control over protecting ourselves and our loved ones. The [National Safety Council](#) (NSC) would like your help to spread this important message and to encourage all vehicle owners to check their vehicle's recall status at www.CheckToProtect.org. It takes a minute or so to learn your recall status, and getting a free repair could save a life.

There are more than 50 million vehicles on the road today with unrepaired safety recalls. That equates to more than 1 in 5 vehicles, and many of those recalls pose risks of injury or death if left unrepaired. Many drivers might not realize that their vehicle is under recall. Other drivers know their vehicle has an open recall but don't think the issue is important. Or they mistakenly think that a recall repair will cost them money, when all recall repairs are free.

Your communities look to you as the authorities on safety – can you help us promote www.CheckToProtect.org to the drivers in your area?

We have developed free graphics, videos and other digital assets that we can provide to your offices. We're grateful for any help you can provide, whether by posting a Check To Protect logo on your website, including information about Check To Protect in newsletters or blogs, or sharing our graphics on your social media channels.

To obtain these online resources, please reach out to NSC Senior Program Manager Tom Musick (tom.musick@nsc.org). We can also customize messaging for your respective audiences.

We would like you and your teams to be safe as well. If you drive a state-issued vehicle, be sure to check its vehicle identification number (VIN) at www.CheckToProtect.org. Encourage your colleagues and staff to check their personal vehicles' recall status as well; they might be surprised to learn that the issue affects them.

NSC can also help you search government fleets. Check To Protect has access to a bulk VIN lookup tool that can search the recall status of up to 10,000 vehicles at a time.

Safety is more essential than ever, and we are so grateful for what you do. Let's work together to keep our people – and their vehicles – safe.



CheckToProtect.org for auto recalls





Directions
in Highway Safety

GHSA Calendar



JUNE 2 - JULY 8

**Lifesavers Conference 2020
Webinar Series**
<https://bit.ly/2XDPRwG>

JULY 7-9

**Family, Career and Community Leaders
of America (FCCLA) Virtual National
Leadership Conference**
<https://bit.ly/36wOfsS>

JULY 24-29

**National Organization of Black Law
Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
44th Annual Training Conference
& Exhibit**
Cleveland, OH
<https://bit.ly/3eASeHN>

AUGUST 6-8

**International Association of Chiefs
of Police (IACP) Training Conference on
Drugs, Alcohol & Impaired Driving**
San Antonio, TX
<https://bit.ly/2XD3TyP>

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