

## DID YOU KNOW???

### PEDESTRIAN DEATHS HIT 28-YEAR HIGH

The number of pedestrians killed along U.S. roadways last year climbed to the highest level since 1990, according to a new report from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA). That report determined that about 6,227 pedestrians were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2018 — a 4 percent increase over 2017 and the highest mortality rate since 1990. The association based its estimate on data collected by state highway safety offices. U.S. pedestrian fatalities have increased 41 percent since 2008 and now account for 16 percent of all traffic fatalities, the association said.

Why are more people being killed by vehicles? For starters, America's growing love affair with pickups, SUVs and crossover utility vehicles means pedestrians are being hit by bigger, heavier, and more powerful vehicles. As a result, pedestrians who are hit are more likely to die or suffer life-threatening injuries, the association said. Pedestrian fatalities involving SUVs jumped by 50 percent between 2013 and 2017, it estimates.

Another factor is the growing population in many states, which has led to more deadly encounters between drivers and pedestrians. The report also blames people being distracted by their smartphones and not being focused on the road as contributing to pedestrian fatalities. I have said in these articles that local pedestrians don't know how to cross streets and roads safely. They fail to look drivers in the eye, are monopolized by their smart phones, walk against the walk signal, and walk on the wrong side of the road.

Bad behavior in and out of cars is also to blame. The ubiquity of smartphones over the past decade "can be a significant source of distraction for all road users," said the report. Drivers are also paying less attention as they do other things, such as falling asleep or speeding. And, in about half of traffic crashes that ended in pedestrian fatalities in 2017, either the driver or pedestrian or both reportedly were impaired by alcohol.

The GHSA reports most fatal crashes take place after dark and those nighttime fatalities are rising much faster than deaths in daytime. From 2008 to 2017 the number of nighttime pedestrian fatalities increased by 45 percent, compared to a much smaller 11 percent increase in daytime pedestrian fatalities.

Most pedestrian fatalities take place on local roads, at night, away from intersections, suggesting the need for safer road crossings, or maybe more education and enforcement on proper pedestrian safety for both pedestrians and drivers.

Where are the most pedestrians dying? Just five states account for a whopping 46 percent of all pedestrian deaths, but some of those also happen to be the most populous states like California, Texas, and Florida. But Georgia and Arizona rank higher despite having smaller populations than states like Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York. But population *growth* seems to be a factor. Arizona, for example, saw some of the largest population growth from 2017 to 2018.

What's the answer to bringing down the pedestrian death toll in the U.S.? There's no one-size-fits-all solution, as the author of the study explains. It is important to conduct law enforcement and safety education campaigns to ensure drivers and pedestrians can safely coexist." Both drivers and pedestrians must buy into the goal of safety. Are you in?