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National report: Virginia's rural roads are in 'poor condition,' lead to high fatality rate

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Virginia has some of the worst and most dangerous roads in the country. That's according to a national transportation research group. According to a national report done by TRIP, the Commonwealth has the 14th highest percentage of rural roads, considered to be in 'poor condition.'

The report suggested those rocky roads aren't just dangerous, they can be deadly. Virginia ranked as having the 11th highest rural road fatality rate. Tennessee is number 14 on that list.

The study's definition of 'rural roads' includes state highways.

Washington County, Virginia Sheriff's deputy Chris Brady spends all day on the road.

"You can see a lot of patches out through here," Brady said. We drove on Route 700 and some of its back roads.

"Compared to some other areas I've been to, we have some really good roads - really, really good roads," he said.

We hit a few bumps where the road has been re-paved.

"It's not as smooth as our interstate road," Brady said. "But as long as you travel the road at or less than the posted speed limit, the road is perfectly safe."

Rita Elkins who lives on one of the back roads disagreed.

"We have rode down the road and not paying attention after dark, run off into a ditch," she said. "[I] thought it was the road, but it was broken off."

And Elkins said the road conditions get worse after a big snow or heavy rain.

"As far as me, I'm afraid to get out on the roads," Elkins said. "So I stay at home."

Sheriff Fred Newman said his deputies often check on people who may be stranded in their homes during severe weather. And they work closely with VDOT when there is a problem.

"VDOT has done a very adequate job getting around and filling potholes as quickly as they can," the sheriff said.

There are about 1,400 miles of road in Washington County. The sheriff estimates about half of the accidents they respond to are on rural roads.

But in many of those cases, he does not believe the road condition is to blame.

"Overall in our county, our road conditions are pretty good," Sheriff Newman said. "Predominantly the wrecks that we see were driver error, or driver inattention or not obeying the rules of the road."

Every road in the Commonwealth is maintained by VDOT. News 5 called their statewide spokesperson, but did not hear back immediately.

Here's what VDOT has posted online. Last month, the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved VDOT's six year improvement plan. It will cost \$18.6 billion dollars, and will fund more than 3,600 road, bridge and infrastructure projects across the state.