

Deficiencies in America's Rural Roads causing Fatalities, finds report



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A [report](#) from the national transportation research group TRIP has found that the rural road fatality rate is three times higher than all other roads, while 15 percent of rural roads are in poor shape and 22 percent of rural bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

The report defined rural America as counties lacking an urban area with a population of 50,000 or more, or which lack a large commuting flow to a county containing at least one urban area with a population of 50,000 or greater. Rural areas are home to about 15 percent of the country's population.

In 2012, non-Interstate rural roads had a traffic fatality rate of 2.21 deaths for every 100 million vehicle miles of travel, compared to a fatality rate on all other roads of 0.78 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.

In 2012, crashes on the nation's rural, non-Interstate routes resulted in 16,161 fatalities, accounting for nearly half – 48 percent – of the nation's 33,561 traffic deaths for the year.

Both the rate and number of fatalities rose in 2012 after years of decreases. Traffic fatalities on non-Interstate rural roads decreased from 2.61 traffic fatalities per 100 million miles of travel in 2005 to 2.14 in 2011. The number of traffic fatalities on the nation's rural non-Interstate roads decreased from 20,333 in 2005 to 15,668 in 2011.

The figure for 2012 therefore represents a climb of 493.

Texas had the highest fatality rate for 2012 at 1509, followed by California and North Carolina (1,042 and 844 respectively).

Inadequate or lack of road safety features, longer emergency vehicle response times and the higher speeds travelled on rural roads compared to urban roads were all found to be major factors in the higher traffic fatality rate found on rural, non-Interstate routes.

In response to the report's findings, the Chief Executive Officer of the Associated General Contractors of America, Stephen E. Sandherr, called for Congress to Act to fund road repairs. He said: "As this report makes clear, Washington's failure to adequately fund repairs to our aging network of roads and bridges is having an even worse impact on our rural roads than the rest of our transportation system. And while these rural roads may not be the ones most commuters use on a daily basis, they play a vital role in assuring the movement of hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of agricultural, energy and manufacturing products every day.

"Neglecting our rural road network needlessly risks lives and forces shipping delays that inflate the cost



of fuel, groceries and countless other essential consumer products.

"Even as our nationwide network of roads and bridges continues to age and deteriorate, the U.S. Department of Transportation is warning states it will begin cutting back federal funding for highway projects in August as the balance in the federal Highway Trust Fund approaches dangerously low levels. The mere threat of this funding slowdown has already prompted many states to reduce the number of road and bridge repair projects they undertake this year. Allowing such a federal funding slowdown will lead to even worse road conditions and put more road users at risk.

"Congress and the Obama administration must work together to address declining Highway Trust Fund revenues and bring all our roads and bridges back to a state of good repair. That is why our members will continue to use the [Hardhats for Highways](#) campaign to contact their elected officials and urge them to act quickly to fully fund highway and bridge repairs and pass a long-term surface transportation bill this year."