



Virginia ranked 15th in the nation for rural road fatalities



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Virginia ranks 15th among U.S. states with the highest number of fatalities on rural roads, according to a 2019 report from TRIP, a national transportation research group.

The report found that for every 100 million vehicle miles of travel, the average number of traffic fatalities on rural, non-interstate roads in Virginia is 2.34. That is more than four times the average number of fatalities on all other roads in Virginia.

The TRIP report also states that pedestrians, drivers and bikers on rural roads should be aware of factors such as “... narrow lanes, limited shoulders, sharp curves, exposed hazards, pavement drop-offs, steep slopes and limited clear zones” along roadsides.

“Often, roads in rural areas are much narrower and curvier; when the right-of-way has not been maintained, this makes the usable path even more narrow,” explained Andrew Smith, associate director of governmental relations for [Virginia Farm Bureau Federation](#). “Having good roads in rural areas is just as important as those in more populated areas of the state.”

The rise in fatalities occurring on rural roads also could be attributed to the poor structure of bridges and pavement in rural areas. The TRIP report said many states have high fatality rates on rural roads, as well as poor pavement and bridge structures.

In addition to these problems, rural roads often are used by farmers driving large farm equipment. Farmers frequently need to transport equipment from one field to another, and that entails driving or towing the equipment on rural roads and, at times, main roads and bridges as well.

Dana Fisher, chairman of the VFBF Safety Committee, shared an example of how accidents can occur on rural roads when drivers encounter farm equipment.

“Today, there are many distractions vying for drivers’ attention. If you’re going 45 to 50 miles per hour, approaching a tractor that’s going 20 miles per hour, you’re going to close the distance fast,” Fisher noted. “At that point, there’s not much time to react.”

He advises drivers on rural roads to “practice patience, and be aware of your surroundings. It could be the difference between a safe ride home and an accident.”