

## State and county road deaths studied

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TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit has produced an extensive study of the nation's roadways which shows Texas as among the nations leader in rural fatalities.

The study shows that at a time when many road repairs are needed, the tremendous decrease in vehicle travel that has occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to reduce state transportation revenues by at least 30% – approximately \$50 billion – over the next 18 months

"Rural roads are more likely to have narrow lanes, limited shoulders, sharp curves, exposed hazards, pavement drop-offs, steep slopes and limited clear zones along roadsides. There were 1,295 fatalities on Texas' non-Interstate, rural roads in 2018." the report states.

Locally, Texas Department of Transportation records for 2018 show that out of a total of 20 highway deaths. seven of the fatalities on Henderson County Farm-to-Market Roads. An additional six were recorded on county roads. The remaining seven were on state and U.S. highways.

Speed was the largest contributing factor in 2018 Henderson County wrecks accounting for six fatalities. The 121 speed related wrecks also caused nine serious injuries. Five of the fatalities involved the use of alcohol.

Anderson County had 14 roadway fatalities in 2018, with only one on a farm-to-market road and three on county roads. Cherokee County totaled 15 fatalities with six on FMs and one on a county road.

Van Zandt County, which is traversed by Interstate 20 showed only one death on that stretch. Another eight, however were on state and U.S. Highways. Four occurred on Farm-to-Market Roads and two on county roads.

Inside the city limits, Athens wrecks totaled 215 in 2018, which accounted for two deaths and another five serious injuries.

The TRIP study shows Texas with 2.24 fatalities per 100 million miles driven on rural roads. The national average is 2.00. For all roadways, Texas had a rate of 1.04 deaths per 100 million. The national rate is .88.

TRIP reports 2% of Texas' rural bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition and 49% are rated in fair condition. Bridges rated poor/structurally deficient have significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge and are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including agricultural equipment, commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles.

A bridge is classified as structurally deficient if it meets any of the following criteria:

- It has an extreme restriction on its load-carrying capacity.
- It has deterioration severe enough to reduce its load-carrying capacity beneath its

original as-built capacity

- It is closed.
- It is frequently over-topped during flooding, creating severe traffic delays.

TxDOT reported in 2018 Henderson County had 32 bridges off the state highway system. Of those 19 were rated as good or better. Twelve bridges were rates as functionally obsolete. One was rated as sub standard for load only. A bridge is considered sub-standard for load only if it is not classified as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, but has a load capacity less than the maximum load permitted by state law.