



## Arkansas sees increase in traffic deaths

[TRAFFIC](#) / By [amolivia90](#) | June 30, 2022

According to the National Transportation Research Group, Arkansas saw a 40% increase in traffic deaths between 2019 and 2020, but says the numbers are still high.

Arkansas, USA – A new report released today by the national non-profit transportation research organization TRIP shows how Arkansas was among the top four states with the highest rise in traffic deaths between 2019 and 2021.

According to the report, Arkansas saw a 37% increase in traffic deaths during those three years, despite a decrease in the number of people traveling due to the pandemic. However, ARDOT says its reporting is a big factor in this.

“The report is very concerning, we have been really looking at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on traffic safety,” said Roque Moretti, director of policy and research at Trip.

In 2019, the report showed a total of 500 road accident deaths in Arkansas. Whereas in 2021, that number jumped to nearly 700.

“Obviously, when you see a rise in airline accident numbers like this, it’s concerning,” said Ellen Coulter, deputy information officer for the Arkansas Department of Transportation.

Coulter says there are two reasons for the increase.

“The agencies haven’t sent out all the crash reports,” Coulter said.

In 2020, ARDOT says this has changed and the increase in deaths reflects this.

“However, this does not change our priorities in terms of safety,” Coulter said.

ARDOT says the labor shortage is putting management in a bind.

The TRP report says increased law enforcement, lighting, signage, turns and bike lanes should help reduce the problem. Safe driving can also halt the increase in traffic fatalities. However, TRIP research shows that this does not happen.

“Really, the outcome of drivers who started with the pandemic is starting to show risky behavior. More speed, less use of seat belts, an increase or increase in impaired driving through alcohol and drugs,” Moretti said.

5NEWS reached out to Sebastian County Road Manager Jim Carter, who said he doesn’t see a significant increase in traffic deaths in the county. However, his crews are updating the signage so it is visible to drivers.

5NEWS asked ARDOT if increasing Arkansas speed limits on highways is a potential factor for increased fatalities. ARDOT says no, it is doing studies to see if drivers are ready to increase the speed limits.