

Virginia traffic fatalities surged 16 percent from 2019 to 2021



AAA urges states to abide by the National Roadway Safety Strategy to reduce traffic fatalities. (File)

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Published: **Wednesday, June 29, 2022**

RICHMOND, Va. (WWBT) - Despite the pandemic-induced drop in vehicle travel, the year 2020 saw a dramatic increase in U.S. traffic fatalities.

This is according to a new [report](#) from TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit. The report looks at traffic fatality trends on a national and state level and examines the possible causes for this nationwide increase.

While Virginia has seen a 16 percent surge in traffic fatalities, the nation as a whole has surpassed that number with a 19 percent increase over the three-year span.

The TRIP report suggests that this surge could be attributed to increased patterns of risky driving since the pandemic.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) agrees, reporting that “after the declaration

of the public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States changed significantly. Of the drivers who remained on the roads, some engaged in riskier behavior, including speeding, failure to wear seatbelts, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.”

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS) drew similar conclusions in a survey they conducted in October and November 2020. Drivers who reported increasing their time on the road since the pandemic also said that they were more likely to engage in reckless driving behaviors.

“It is possible that many of the individuals who were willing to travel - and even increase their travel - despite the health risks associated with the pandemic were already more willing than average to take other risks”, AAAFTS said in a news release.

This aligns with NHTSA data that shows increases in crashes related to alcohol, speeding, and failure to wear seatbelts.

To combat these deadly behaviors and rising fatalities, the U.S. Department of Transportation adopted a comprehensive [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#). This program is based on the [Safe System Approach](#). The initiative focuses on promoting safer roads, vehicles, speed limits, post-crash care, and driving behavior overall.

AAA urges states to implement these procedures into their transportation programs in order to make safe driving a real priority.