

Traffic-related incidents in South Carolina cause \$30.9B in damages in 2023

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\$30.9 billion in damages were caused by traffic accidents in the Palmetto State last year.

SOUTH CAROLINA (WCIV) — South Carolina suffered nearly \$31 billion in damages from traffic incidents last year, according to a new national report. TRIP, a national traffic research nonprofit center, reported the numbers as part of a nationwide report on traffic statistics. Nationally, the organization also reported the second straight year of decreasing traffic fatalities, after a massive surge during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the positive change, traffic deaths remained significantly higher in number than a decade ago, something lawmakers seek to address.

“While it is good news that the number of traffic fatalities is trending downward in recent years, the sharp increase in traffic fatalities over the past decade must be addressed,” said Dave Kearby, TRIP’s executive director.

“Making a commitment to eliminating fatal and serious injuries on the nation’s roadways will require robust investment and coordinated activities by transportation and safety-related agencies in providing the needed layers of protection for the nation’s motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists, including safe road users, safe roads, safe vehicles, safe speeds and high-quality post-crash care.”

Officials have acknowledged that improving road conditions and safety is a costly investment. However, with the entire U.S. suffering \$1.9 trillion in economic losses due to accidents, many say that the time is now to invest in American roads.

Losses are measured through a variety of different factors. According to a 2023 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report, the tangible economic costs of traffic crashes include medical care, lost productivity, legal and court costs, insurance administrative costs, workplace costs, congestion impacts (travel delay, excess fuel consumption and pollution), emergency services, and property damage.

“Ensuring safety on our nation’s roadways is a collective effort involving everyone from drivers to government entities that finance road improvements, as well as manufacturers, contractors, and innovators,” said Mike Hare, chairman of the board of directors of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA). “We must all commit to reducing fatalities and serious injuries on American roadways.”

Counteracting the problem with U.S. roads, however, is thankfully not as expensive as the damages caused by doing nothing. The U.S. is drowning in \$146 billion in needed transportation infrastructure improvements according to a 2017 report from ATSSA.

South Carolina has work to do in terms of safety improvements as well, with its lack of a motorcycle helmet law for riders over 21, and over two-thirds of SC roads in poor or mediocre condition, according to TRIP.

“We are experiencing what can only be described as a crisis on our roadways as it relates to safety, and it is imperative that transportation agencies address this crisis using all means and methods at our disposal,” said Craig Thompson, president of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. “AASHTO...believes we all play a role in eliminating fatalities on our nation’s roadways.”