

Ahead of July 4 travel rush, report shows surge of traffic deaths in Washington

By [Deedee Sun, KIRO 7 News](#) | July 02, 2024



VIDEO: WA traffic deaths on the rise

An alarming new report shows deadly crashes in Washington State are soaring – reaching 813 people killed last year.

The latest numbers come from [“TRIP: A National Transportation Research Nonprofit”](#). It shows over the past decade, traffic fatalities in Washington State have surged a whopping 86 percent.

The startling new numbers come as AAA says a record 60 million people are expected to hit the road for the Fourth of July.

Drivers in Washington say they’ve felt the pain on the road and seen all sorts of bad behavior.

“People going double the speed limit,” said John Kisela, a Seattle driver.

“Cutting in front of people, doing stuff like that,” said Gary Hall, another Seattle driver.

A driver visiting from Alberta, Canada, said she noticed that people here are less tolerant than drivers at home.

“We’ve seen people honking way too quickly, very aggressively,” Kristen Bright said.

The “TRIP” report shows the deadly trend in Washington is spiking, with a sharp 11 percent jump in traffic fatalities in 2023. Meanwhile, nationwide, traffic deaths decreased in 2023 for the second straight year.

“The report really underscores a traffic safety crisis in Washington State,” said Rocky Moretti, a spokesperson for “TRIP,” which is based in Washington D.C. “This spike we saw beginning in COVID has started to moderate in most states, but that hasn’t been the case in Washington State, where traffic fatalities were increasing through the pandemic and have continued to increase,” he said.

Researchers found nationwide that the pandemic was correlated with a deterioration of driver behavior, including more speeding and impairment. The study did not have data specifically on why Washington wasn’t seeing the improvement.

Some drivers wonder if it was because of Washington’s strict pursuit laws that were recently loosened.

“If you’re not going to enforce the law, expect to get lawbreakers,” Kisela said.

TRIP says infrastructure improvements like clear lane markings, well-lit intersections, and turn lanes and rumble strips where appropriate can help.

But both Moretti and drivers say we can all be part of the solution.

“Being aware of your surroundings. By making sure you’re not distracted, not impaired,” he said.

“We’re all in a hurry or this or that, but there are other lives out there around us. We need to think of that,” Hall said.