

Mountain West states are high on annual driving fatalities list

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Arizona Department of Public Safety via AP

Firefighters on an Arizona interstate hose water on tractor-trailers and cars enveloped in smoke, Saturday, March 1, 2025.

Fatalities have decreased in the past decade. But driving behaviors changed during the pandemic and they continue to contribute to high rates of accidents, particularly in the Mountain West. Nationally, 36,640 people died in traffic crashes in 2025. Mountain West states, known for long distances between towns and longer distances between metro areas, were among the most dangerous on the list. That's according to the annual "[Addressing America's Traffic Safety Crisis](#)" report from the nonprofit [TRIP](#), citing data from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

New Mexico topped the list, which measured incidents for all of 2025. Arizona ranked 4th. Nevada 11th, Colorado 13th. Wyoming and Idaho also made the top 20.

But the rankings don't mean that New Mexico had the most fatalities. That state had 458 fatalities, which, for example, is fewer than Arizona's 1,161. The study ranked New Mexico's roads as more dangerous based on the number of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.

Overall, Rocky Moretti, TRIP's director of policy and research, said driver behavior and travel patterns changed significantly during the pandemic. That's when speeding and impaired driving peaked, along with fatalities. Moretti said such "risky" behaviors

have changed slightly since then, and fatalities have come down, but they're still higher than they were a decade ago.

"We're seeing reduced fatalities due to speeding," he said. "Alcohol related crashes from 2020 to 2024 actually increased slightly."

The roadways are especially dangerous for motorcyclists.

"Motorcyclists, in terms of their level of travel, are less than 1%," Moretti said. However, "a motorcyclist is 36 times more likely to be killed to travel the same distance as car passengers." Pedestrian and cyclist fatalities were also a concern, Moretti said.

He said to reduce deaths, communities could look to the U.S. Department of Transportation's [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#), which offers a number of solutions, including encouraging safe driver behavior, creating safer work zones and enhancing post-crash care.

"We can't accept the status quo where 36,000 people a year are being killed, based on our need for mobility and we can have a transportation system that allows us to travel by all modes and travel safely," Moretti said.

The study showed that from 2020 to 2024, the number of fatalities in distraction-affected traffic crashes increased by 2%, from 3,154 to 3,208.

TRIP estimates that fatal and serious traffic crashes in the U.S. in 2025 caused a total of \$1.75 trillion "in the value of societal harm," including \$1.32 trillion in quality-of-life costs.

Most Mountain West states ranked within the top 20 for highest fatality rates in the nation in 2025.

[Fatalities in Mountain West states:](#)

- New Mexico: 458 fatalities, ranked No. 1.
- Arizona: 1,161 fatalities, ranked No. 4
- Nevada: 382 fatalities, ranked No. 11
- Colorado: 715 fatalities, ranked No. 13
- Wyoming: 124 fatalities, ranked No. 15
- Idaho: 254 fatalities, ranked No. 17
- Utah: 275 fatalities (not ranked)
- Montana: 199 fatalities (not ranked)