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Oklahoma ranks 10th in US traffic fatality rate

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In Oklahoma, close to seven in 10 alcohol-related crashes involve a driver at nearly twice the legal limit. (Deposit Photos)

Summary:

– Oklahoma had the 10th-highest traffic fatality rate in 2025.

– Alcohol was involved in 35% of Oklahoma traffic deaths.

– Rural roads and low seatbelt use add to the state’s [traffic safety](#) challenges.

Oklahoma had the 10th-highest traffic fatality rate in the nation in 2025, and [drunk driving](#) is a major reason why, according to a [national safety report](#) and new alcohol-related crash data.

Crashes killed 4,130 people in Oklahoma from 2020 to 2025, averaging almost two deaths a day, according to a report from [TRIP](#), a national transportation research nonprofit. The state’s fatality rate was 1.35 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2025, well above the national rate of 1.10. Fatal and serious crashes cost Oklahoma an estimated \$26.4 billion in 2025 in economic and quality-of-life costs.

Alcohol is a driving factor. Separate data from [Sigfried and Jensen](#) show 35% of Oklahoma’s traffic deaths

involve a drunk driver, five points above the 30% national rate and nearly twice the share in Alaska, the safest state at 19%. Texas ranks worse, at 40%, and Kansas matches Oklahoma at 35%, making the region among the nation’s worst for drunk driving.

Close to seven in 10 [alcohol-related crashes](#) involve a driver at .15 blood alcohol content or higher, nearly twice the legal limit, where crash risk is 12 times that of a sober driver. Nearly four in 10 people killed by drunk drivers were not behind the wheel; they were passengers, other drivers, or pedestrians and cyclists.

Rural roads, which carry a death rate 1.5 times that of city roads nationally, compound the risk in Oklahoma, along with low seatbelt use and thin police coverage.

Ignition interlock devices, which require drivers to pass a breath test before starting their car, cut repeat drunk driving offenses by up to 70%, but only 15% to 20% of convicted drivers have one installed.

Haley Jenkins, co-owner of [Direct Traffic Control](#) in Muskogee and chair of the [American Traffic Safety Services Association](#), said the TRIP findings show both progress and persistent risk.

“Every traffic fatality represents a life lost, a family changed forever, and a reminder that [roadway safety](#) demands continued attention and investment,” Jenkins said.

Utah offers a possible model. It’s the only state to lower its legal blood alcohol limit from .08 to .05, and its fatal crash rate fell 19.8% afterward. Its drunk driving death share now sits at 26%, nine points below Oklahoma’s.

TRIP’s executive director, Dave Kearby, said closing that gap will take sustained investment.

“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,” Kearby said.