Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries

Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries: Traffic fatalities and Serious Injuries per 100 million vehicle miles traveled

Oregon's strategy

ODOT's strategy to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries is to implement traffic safety programs and proven countermeasures based on the identified causes of fatal crashes in Oregon. Oregon's Triennial Highway Safety Performance Plan (HSP) and the State's Transportation Safety Action Plan (5-year TSAP) outline safety activities directed at reducing risky driving *behaviors* like impairment from alcohol or drugs, distracted driving, and speeding (three of the top contributors to crashes in Oregon). The Transportation Safety Office (TSO) partners closely with ODOT's Engineering & Technical Services Branch (ETSB) and their Highway Safety Program which addresses *infrastructure* solutions for roadway safety in the TSAP.

TSO also funds implementation of programs for motorcycle safety, child passenger safety, bicycle and pedestrian safety and other priority problem areas. ETSB also seeks to combat traffic fatalities and serious injuries through strategic highway safety infrastructure improvements (ARTS), such as intersection improvements, median cable barriers, rumble strips, and pedestrian crossings. The ODOT-DMV also contributes through their medically at-risk driver program.

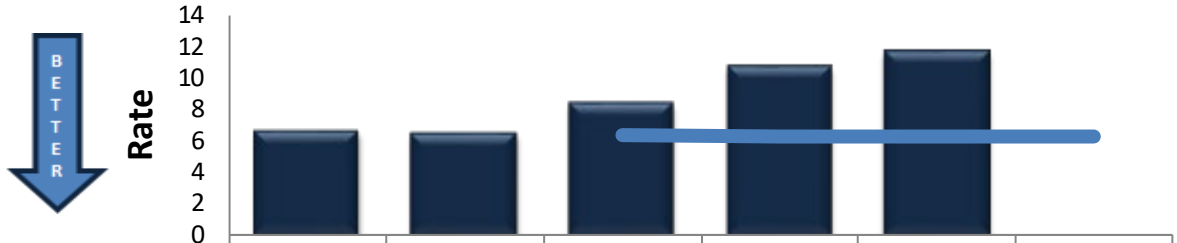
About the target

Oregon's goal is zero fatalities, but realistic interim targets are set based on the desire to reduce fatality and serious injury rates gradually over time to achieve the longer- term goal of zero. Oregon's current target of 6.28 was set using a 5-year average and remains unchanged given the post-pandemic upward trend in fatal and serious injuries in Oregon and across the nation.

How Oregon is doing and how it compares

Oregon continues to face challenges in road safety, with 2023 showing an increase in serious traffic incidents. The state recorded 11.67 fatalities and serious injuries per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), up from 10.69 in 2022. When looking specifically at fatal crashes, Oregon's fatalities per 100 million VMT rate remained above the national average for another year.

Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Actual	6.67	6.52	8.41	10.69	11.67	
Goal			6.37	6.28	6.28	6.28

Fact

Fatal and Serious Injury crashes involving alcohol or drug impairment, speed, and/or not wearing safety belts are the most common contributing factors to fatalities on Oregon roadways.

However, there are encouraging signs of progress. Preliminary data from 2024 shows a meaningful 9% reduction in traffic fatalities, dropping from 587 deaths in 2023 to 538 in 2024. This positive trend represents a continued decline from Oregon's recent peak of 602 fatalities in 2022.

Factors affecting results and what needs to be done

Several factors affected the traffic fatality and serious injury rate for 2023. The biggest increases in 2023 involved distracted driving, speed, and young drivers (age 15-20.) Additional factors contributing to the increase included non-motorists, substance involved (drugs and/or alcohol), as well as not wearing a safety belt. ODOT and its safety partners will continue efforts to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by reviewing the causes of fatalities; applying proven countermeasures; and implementing safety activities accordingly by allocating safety resources to the programs and projects most effective at reducing fatal and serious injury crashes.

About the data

Traffic fatality and serious injury rates are reported on a calendar year basis. The data that ODOT uses to measure traffic fatality rates has several strengths. It is closely coded to national standards, which allows for state-to-state comparisons on fatality data, and it is a comprehensive data set that includes medical information. Some weaknesses of the data are that it is sometimes difficult to obtain blood alcohol content reports or other drug data from medical screening (to prove impairment); to determine use of a cell phone while driving (requires a search warrant); access to death certificates for coding purposes is not timely, and priority is placed on entering the data into the state's data systems, and not on creating localized data reports for state, city, and county agencies and organizations. This causes delays in the implementation of local and statewide countermeasures.

ODOT continues its work on a crash reporting and data modernization plan to obtain, process, and provide quality control of the data in a more accurate and timely fashion for end users. The Crash Analysis & Reporting unit (CAR) received a direct 5-year grant award for $12M from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's State Electronic Data System improvement funds for this purpose.

Contact information

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Data source

Crash Analysis and Reporting, ODOT; Fatality Analysis Reporting System, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, US DOT