

U.S. Study: Texas ranked 3rd in fatal pedestrian accidents

Pedestrian accident deaths rose to the highest level in nearly 30 years in the United States in 2018 and Texas ranked third, with 298 fatalities, according to a nationwide study.

“Only California, with 432 pedestrian fatalities registered during the analyzed time frame, and Florida, with 330, rank higher than Texas in the report,” according to houstonpublicmedia.org.

The findings about pedestrian accident deaths were contained in a February 2019 [report — “Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State”](#) — by the Governors Highway Safety Association. The association is a Washington D.C. nonprofit that consists of highway safety officers from the states, U.S. territories and Indian nations.

The report found that nearly half of the 6,227 pedestrian accident deaths occurred in just five states, California, Florida, Texas, Georgia and Arizona.

Many of those pedestrian accident deaths occurred in big cities like Houston and Miami.

“You have to be very proactive in Houston to ensure your safety and be very vigilant, make eye contact with a vehicle that you believe is seeing you,” said Jonathan Brooks of transportation advocacy group Link Houston.

The most common traffic accidents

Analysts who discussed the report on [National Public Radio \(NPR\)](#) and other media outlets put the blame for the rise in pedestrian accident deaths on:

- Distractions like smartphone use by both drivers and walkers, petting a dog or applying lipstick while driving
- An increase in SUVs, which can do more damage on impact than smaller vehicles
- Roads without crosswalks or with crosswalks that are too far for walkers to reach. Part of the larger issue of a nationwide transportation system built for vehicles, not people.
- Pedestrian deaths in accidents occurring in the highest population growth states, where development in suburbs puts walkers in areas not necessarily expected by drivers. Houston is a good example. In Texas statewide, 1.04 pedestrians per 100,000 people were killed in the first half of 2018. In Houston, 2.73 pedestrians per 100,000 people were killed.
- Nighttime crashes represented over 90 percent of the increase in pedestrian deaths, [according to U.S. News & World Report](#).

In the city of Macon, Georgia, many of the main thoroughfares are state highways, while simultaneously serving as walking routes for pedestrians, despite the roads being designed for large trucks and rush-hour traffic.

"We have an awful lot of people who don't have their own vehicles who are dependent either on transit or on their own foot power to get around," Tom Ellington, chairman of Macon's Pedestrian Safety Review Board, told NPR.

From 2008-2017, pedestrian accident deaths increased 35 percent, to 5,977 from 4,414, the Governors Highway Safety Association report said.

After adjusting for anticipated underreporting in some state data and considering trends in pedestrian fatalities, the report estimated the number of pedestrian accident deaths nationwide in 2018 to be 6,227.

This projection represents a continuation of an increasing trend in pedestrian deaths going back to 2009 and would be the largest number of pedestrian deaths in the U.S. since 1990.

In 1990, pedestrian accident deaths in the U.S. totaled 6,482, according to commonwealthmagazine.org.

Smartphones as distraction in driving are a common culprit in police reports. The Pew Research Center reported last year that 95 percent of all Americans have a smartphone.

Americans also continue embracing SUVs. Over 17 million vehicles were purchased in 2018 for the fourth year in a row, and 68 percent of them were trucks and SUVs, according to foxnews.com.

The combination of drivers and walkers increasingly being distracted and the impact from bigger, heavier SUVs really underscores why pedestrian accident deaths have risen.

"There's no question that pedestrians hit by SUVs are more likely to die than those hit by a car," said Richard Retting, in the Governors Highway Safety Association report.

Texas safety measures

Texas and other states are addressing pedestrian accident deaths with safety measures related to engineering, enforcement and education. Steps already underway or being considered in Texas are:

- Installing safer places to walk along a roadway, such as complete sidewalk networks
- Making it safer to cross roadways by improving pedestrian signals and crosswalks
- Placing devices above roadways known as pedestrian hybrid beacons, to control traffic and help walkers cross safely at mid-block crossings and uncontrolled intersections
- Education about safety measures focused on pedestrians, bicyclists and children.

Retting suggested making pedestrian detection and crash avoidance features in vehicles more affordable or even standard equipment, to help in cutting pedestrian accident deaths.

Other ideas from the Governors Highway Safety Association report to reduce the number of pedestrian accident deaths include trying to weaken the blow from getting hit by an SUV by building sport utility vehicles with softer fronts and fronts that have a sloping to them more like cars.

In other states, improvements include reminding pedestrians to wear bright clothing or reflective attire when walking at night, increasing the number of crosswalks and conducting police stings on motorists who fail to yield for pedestrians in crosswalks.

If you have been injured in a [pedestrian accident](#) because of a driver's negligent behavior, know your rights. Consult with an experienced attorney who knows how to pursue justice and get results. [Contact](#) Smith & Hassler Attorneys at Law in Houston today.