

# THE SHERIFF'S SIGNAL

A National Traffic Safety Brief to Support Safe Roads and Strong Communities



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## WELCOME TO THE SHERIFF'S SIGNAL!

The first of four issues providing information on traffic safety topics that are relevant to you, law enforcement leaders who prioritize traffic enforcement to save lives on our roads every day. We'd love your feedback. Please contact Candace Hill at [chill@sheriffs.org](mailto:chill@sheriffs.org) to share your thoughts on the newsletter.

# KEY SAFETY METRICS AND TRENDS

## Moving in the Right Direction.

This December, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released early estimates of motor vehicle traffic fatalities for the first 9 months of 2025. These estimates show 27,365 people have died in traffic crashes. That's a decrease of about 6.4 percent compared to the same period in 2024.



It's not the first time we're seeing a decrease. Beginning with the second quarter of 2022, traffic fatalities have been trending down for over three years now, with the third quarter of 2025 representing the 14th consecutive quarterly reduction. In a press release for NHTSA's upcoming holiday campaign, NHTSA Administrator Jonathan Morrison emphasized NHTSA's collaboration with state and local partners, especially law enforcement, to improve safety on our roads.

"...more than 27,000 people died in traffic crashes from January to September 2025. And that's why we're doubling down on solutions that work, including partnering with law enforcement to ensure drivers are obeying traffic laws."

*Jonathan Morrison, Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*

**The continued involvement of sheriffs' offices in traffic enforcement is essential to saving more lives.** Despite the downward trend in recent years, we still lost over 39,000 people in 2024. Most of that loss was preventable including the vulnerable road users or pedestrians that comprised 18% of all fatalities.

# EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

## TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT SAVES LIVES.

NHTSA's research supports the effectiveness of traffic enforcement. Specifically high visibility enforcement (HVE), which according to NHTSA “combines highly visible and proactive law enforcement addressing a specific traffic safety issue. Law enforcement efforts are combined with visibility elements and a publicity strategy to educate the public and promote voluntary compliance with the law.”

Types of High Visibility Enforcement:

Saturation  
Patrol

Checkpoints

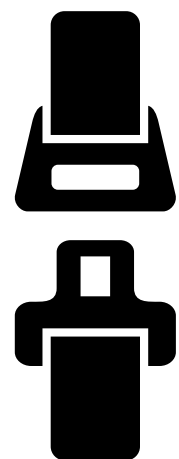
Wave

Integrated  
Enforcement

Automated  
Enforcement

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/enforcement-justice-services/high-visibility-enforcement-hve-toolkit>

HVE is an essential and effective countermeasure to the risky driving behaviors we see every day on our roads. To increase occupants' protection, short-term, high-visibility seat belt law enforcement and integrated nighttime seat belt enforcement have demonstrated effectiveness. For preventing distracted driving, high-visibility cell phone/text messaging enforcement is also effective. Likewise, publicized sobriety checkpoints and high-visibility saturation patrols demonstrated effectiveness for preventing alcohol-impaired driving, but the relationship between speeding / reckless driving and HVE is less straight forward. Significant behavior change for the latter group is difficult to show via research, but NHTSA reports that for all targeted behaviors, HVE does reduce the prohibited behavior. Check out NHTSA's Countermeasures That Work for more information on effective enforcement.



This holiday season, prioritize traffic enforcement and join NHTSA in their campaign to stop impaired driving. Check out NHTSA's HVE toolkit and the impaired driving campaign materials here.

# POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

## Learning Through Public-Private Partnerships.

Vehicles are now often equipped with advanced driver assistance features, including collision warnings, automatic emergency braking, and lane keeping assistance. Through its Partnership for Analytics Research in Traffic Safety (PARTS) Program, NHTSA can access real-world data from vehicles equipped with these safety features and study their effectiveness. Under current law, however, the PARTS Program is limited in the amount and type of safety data it can handle. The Vehicle Safety Research Act, bi-partisan legislation introduced by Senators Gary Peters (MI) and Todd Young (IN), would codify the PARTS Program and unlock an expanded range of data collection and information sharing between automakers and the government that will help accelerate both deployment and oversight of advanced safety technologies.

Automakers are onboard with this as well. Regina Carto, Vice President of General Motors Global Product Safety, Systems and Certification, said “GM remains committed to the PARTS program and its industry-wide collaborative mission to support advanced driver assistance systems development. Benchmark data from the program helps us all raise the bar in vehicle safety performance.”



## Proposed Rescheduling of Marijuana.

On December 18th, President Trump signed an Executive Order to reschedule marijuana from a Schedule I to a Schedule III controlled substance. NSA recommended rescheduling it to Schedule II in 2023, after the Department of Health and Human Services initially recommended the change. Placing marijuana in Schedule III will align it with ketamine and certain prescription pain medications, while keeping recreational use illegal at the federal level. The change will still need to go through the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) formal rule-making process. The reclassification is intended to make scientific research easier, and will likely affect legal cannabis businesses by reducing strict federal tax penalties and increasing their access to banking services. Messaging on the impairing impact of marijuana on driving may become even more critical.

# COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

## Move Over, Drive Safe

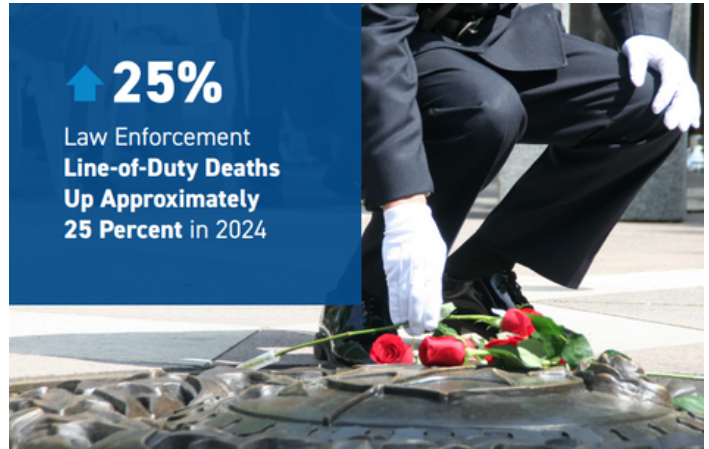


**Wayne County, Michigan.** This past year, NSA worked with Sheriff Raphael Washington and the Wayne County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) to lead a county-wide effort raising awareness on Michigan's Slow Down, Move Over Law. According to the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund, law enforcement officers (LEOs) killed in the line of duty have increased 25% with struck-by fatalities more than doubling, increasing 113% from 2023 to 2024. Those numbers are trending in the *wrong* direction, providing motivation for NSA to do this project.

Ten additional law enforcement agencies (LEAs) participated with WCSO, including several police departments and the Michigan State Patrol. NSA's Public Information Officer (PIO), Pat Royal, coordinated the social media messaging campaign with all the LEAs' PIOs, and NSA's Marketing and Content Coordinator, Sofie Roskin, developed a style guide for the agencies to use. For ideas on your own community engagement efforts, you can look up the posts, which were all tagged with #MoveOverDriveSafe.

Wyandotte Police Department - Michigan · Follow  
March 31 ·

Michigan's Move Over Law requires drivers to slow down and move over for stationary authorized vehicles with flashing, rotating, or oscillating lights. This applies to ... See more



The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. (2024) End-Of-Year Law Enforcement Officers Fatalities Report. <https://nleomf.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/2024-Fatalities-Report-FINAL.pdf>

MSP also assisted the effort by conducting pre- and post-enforcement campaigns. The outcomes of which resonate with recent findings by AAA. Many drivers fail to move over at all, but those that do, often prioritize changing lanes but neglect slowing down. Many are unaware of their state's specific requirements, or which vehicles are protected under the law. Florida, for example, requires drivers to slow down and move over for any disabled vehicles as well as traffic incident responders, while Michigan's law applies to authorized emergency vehicles, or vehicles with flashing, rotating, or oscillating lights activated.

Enforcement of the Move Over law is also labor intensive, requiring at least two LEOs involved in the effort. The inability of agencies to staff these efforts can hinder drivers' compliance as well. The aim of the NSA project was to work with the LEAs to conduct high visibility public outreach to garner more residents' accountability for adhering to the Slow Down, Move Over law.

More work needs to be done. AAA recommends:

- Enhancing enforcement through high-visibility efforts and educational traffic stops, supported by technology like dashcams and automated systems.
- Launching emotionally compelling public awareness campaigns using digital platforms, signage, and media.
- Standardizing laws across states with clearer language and stronger penalties.

If you'd like to learn more about the Wayne County effort, please contact Project Manager, Candace Hill at [chill@sheriffs.org](mailto:chill@sheriffs.org)

# Tools, Technology, and Training

## Driving Knowledge Through Data Analysis

One of the things traffic safety stakeholders struggle with is the **underreporting of risky driving behaviors**. Distracted driving has historically been difficult to prove as the cause of a crash unless the driver admits it. So, how big of a problem is it?

NHTSA reported that distraction was involved in more than one in four (29%) of all crashes in the U.S. in 2019, resulting in 10,546 fatalities, 1.3 million nonfatal injuries, and \$98.2 billion in economic costs. **Cellphone usage continues to be a major contributor to crashes** despite recent hands-free legislation enacted in many states.



“Predictive analytics eliminate the need for guesswork, enabling safety efforts to target interventions proven to prevent crashes. Outcomes can be measured and validated in real time through analysis.”

*Meng, S., Wang, H., Shi, Y., & Gao, G. (2022, May).*

<https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/A%20Data-Driven%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Safer%20Roads.pdf>

A recent report from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and Cambridge Mobile Telematics showed drivers who used phones behind the wheel were 240% more likely to be involved in a crash compared to drivers who did not.

Extracting and analyzing data via new technology that tracks cell phone use alongside the location of vehicles can directly link phone use to traffic incidents, and not only to allow for more accurate reporting; it can also provide valuable insight on how to predict and prevent crashes. For more information on how agencies are institutionalizing analytics-guided safety practices, read the report [here](#).

# EVENTS

## WHERE WE'VE BEEN:

### 2025 CRASH RESPONDER SAFETY WEEK

#### Safety Starts with You

As a member of FHWA's Executive Leadership Group for Traffic Incident Management (ELG TIM), NSA participated in Crash Responder Safety Week this past November. NSA was excited to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the ELG TIM and remains committed to protecting all first responders roadside!



## WHAT'S COMING UP?

Join us! NSA's Winter Conference is in Washington, DC. Our Traffic Safety Committee will meet on **Saturday, January 31, from 12:30 to 3:00pm Eastern at the JW Marriott in Salon D.** You can register at [nsawinter.org](https://nsawinter.org), and we hope to see you there!



**2026**  
**NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION**  
**WINTER CONFERENCE**  
JANUARY 31, 2026 - FEBRUARY 4, 2026

### NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT ON IMPAIRED DRIVING

#### Hurst, Texas.

NSA joins law enforcement leaders from across the country at MADD's Law Enforcement Summit in Texas. NSA's President, Sheriff Chris West, and Traffic Safety Committee (TSC) Chair, Sheriff Brad Cole, presented on national traffic safety priorities for sheriffs, stressing that impaired driving remains a top focus for enforcement, particularly as drugged driving is on the rise. Former TSC Chair, Sheriff (ret.) John Whetsel, was also at the Summit, still doing his part to save lives on our roads!



#### Share your Story!

If you have conducted, or are currently engaging in successful enforcement efforts, please let us know. Contact Candace Hill at [chill@sheriffs.org](mailto:chill@sheriffs.org) to highlight your sheriff's office.