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BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS

Traffic filled Exeter Street in the Back Bay in June.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 17, 2015

Motor vehicle crashes killed 149 people on Massachusetts roads during the first six months of this year, a marginal increase from the same time period last year, but a marked increase from 2013, a new study has found.

The death tally was 2 percent higher than the 146 killed in the same period in 2014, but 21 percent higher than the 123 people killed in 2013.

Nationally, there were 18,600 driving-related deaths in the United States through the first half of this year, or 14 percent more than the same period last year, putting the country's roadways on pace for their deadliest year since 2007, according to a report released Monday by the National Safety Council, a nonprofit created by Congress to promote safety.

"Follow the numbers: the trend we are seeing on our roadways is like a flashing red light — danger lies ahead," said a statement from the council's president and CEO Deborah A.P. Hersman.

She urged motorists to "be a defensive driver and make safe decisions behind the wheel. Your life really depends on it."

The council said that an improving economy, shrinking unemployment rates, and gas prices may be contributing to an increase in deaths because those elements all typically lead to more traffic, as more people commute to work and can afford to drive farther and take vacations.

On the positive side, traffic deaths tied to drunken driving and teen driving have both decreased; seat belt use is up; and cars feature more safety technology.

But at the same time some states have raised speed limits recently and crashes linked to distracted driving have become more common due to motorists fumbling with cell phones and other handheld devices, the council said.

The report did not include figures for July and August which historically are two of the worst months for traffic deaths.

The council also reported that serious traffic injuries were up nationwide by 30 percent during the same period to 2.2 million, and costs from injuries and property damage were up 24 percent to \$152 billion.

Driving deaths by state

Counts are for the first six months of each year, unless otherwise noted

	Months reported	2015	2014	2013	2014 to 2015	2013 to 2015
Alabama	6	381	412	422	-8%	-10%
Alaska	6	27	32	24	-16%	13%
Arizona	6	451	382	419	18%	8%
Arkansas	6	237	207	249	14%	-5%
California	6	1,566	1,302	1,471	20%	6%
Colorado	6	236	200	202	18%	17%
Connecticut	6	95	119	116	-20%	-18%
Delaware	6	47	65	50	-28%	-6%
Dist. of Columbia	6	10	13	18	-23%	-44%
Florida	6	1,441	1,114	1,172	29%	23%
Georgia	6	657	522	573	26%	15%
Hawaii	6	52	54	61	-4%	-15%
Idaho	6	84	79	81	6%	4%
Illinois	6	442	399	475	11%	-7%
Indiana	6	356	289	328	23%	9%
Iowa	6	134	133	137	1%	-2%
Kansas	5	125	151	126	-17%	-1%
Kentucky	6	326	300	321	9%	2%
Louisiana	6	330	275	321	20%	3%
Maine	6	62	60	53	3%	17%
Maryland	6	224	188	217	19%	3%
Massachusetts	6	149	146	123	2%	21%
Michigan	6	409	407	380	0%	8%
Minnesota	6	187	149	158	26%	18%
Mississippi	2	70	63	77	11%	-9%
Missouri	6	383	348	333	10%	15%
Montana	6	72	79	103	-9%	-30%
Nebraska	6	109	108	97	1%	12%

Nevada	6	147	134	126	10%	17%
New Hampshire	6	38	38	52	0%	-27%
New Jersey	6	245	267	250	-8%	-2%
New Mexico	6	131	169	135	-22%	-3%
New York	6	430	-	-	-	-
North Carolina	6	634	531	593	19%	7%
North Dakota	6	61	50	67	22%	-9%
Ohio	6	499	425	439	17%	14%
Oklahoma	6	303	319	263	-5%	15%
Oregon	6	204	128	136	59%	50%
Pennsylvania	6	552	518	553	7%	0%
Rhode Island	6	21	23	19	-9%	11%
South Carolina	6	445	367	344	21%	29%
South Dakota	6	44	67	48	-34%	-8%
Tennessee	6	437	453	442	-4%	-1%
Texas	6	1,643	1,668	1,667	-1%	-1%
Utah	6	129	108	83	19%	55%
Vermont	6	19	17	25	12%	-24%
Virginia	6	344	308	335	12%	3%
Washington	6	235	225	191	4%	23%
West Virginia	4	69	66	88	5%	-22%
Wisconsin	6	254	214	228	19%	11%
Wyoming	6	66	65	46	2%	43%
TOTAL U.S.	6	18,630	16,400	16,617	14%	12%

SOURCE: National Safety Council

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)

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