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Michigan.gov/ohsp

U.S. traffic deaths spike even as pandemic cuts miles traveled

Pandemic lockdowns and stay-at-home orders kept many drivers off U.S. roads and highways last year. But those who did venture out found open lanes that only invited reckless driving, leading to a sharp increase in traffic-crash deaths across the country.

Preliminary data from the nonprofit National Safety Council estimates in a recent report that 42,060 people died in vehicle crashes in 2020, an eight-percent increase over 2019 and the first jump in four years.

Plus, the fatality rate per 100 million miles driven spiked 24 percent, the largest annual percentage increase since the council began collecting data in 1923.



And even though traffic is now getting close to pre-coronavirus levels, the bad behavior on the roads is continuing, authorities say.

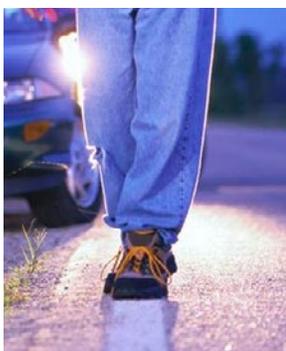
Last year's deaths were the most since 2007 when 43,945 people were killed in vehicle crashes. In addition, the safety council **Deaths** Continued on page 3 >

Pedestrian death rate on record pace

A new report from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) projects that the U.S. pedestrian fatality rate rose 20 percent in the first six months of 2020 as speeding, distracted and impaired driving, and other dangerous driving behaviors increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

GHSA's annual *Spotlight on Highway Safety* offers the first comprehensive look at state and national trends in 2020 pedestrian traffic deaths, based on preliminary data provided by state highway safety offices in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The **Peds** Continued on page 5 >

Nearly 200 arrested for impaired driving during holiday crackdown



Officers from 90 police departments, sheriff's offices and Michigan State Police (MSP) posts increased patrols across the state during the *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaign from December 11, 2020 to January 1, 2021.

Before and during the Christmas and New Year's holidays, law enforcement officers throughout Michigan participated in the enforcement effort with the goal of saving lives and decreasing crashes by stopping impaired drivers.

"If you are impaired by any substance you shouldn't drive," said Michael L. Prince, Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) director. "Motorists were asked to make responsible decisions as they celebrated the holidays and to have a plan in place to get home safely. Unfortunately, the holidays were not a merry occasion for everyone."

Preliminary reports indicate officers made 7,529 traffic stops, arrested 159 drunk drivers and 39 drivers under the influence of drugs, issued 1,120

200 arrested Continued on page 3 >



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GHSA report: Teens and speeding a deadly combination

A new report from the GHSA and Ford Motor Company Fund, titled *Teens and Speeding: Breaking the Deadly Cycle*, highlights the significant role speeding plays in teen driver fatalities and offers practical tools to help parents rein in this lethal driving habit.

The analysis found that from 2015 to 2019, teen drivers and passengers (16-19 years of age) accounted for a greater proportion of speeding-related fatalities (43 percent) than all other age groups (30 percent). During this five-year period, 4,930 teen drivers and passengers died in speeding-related crashes.

In Michigan, over that same five-year period, the total number of teen fatalities was 312, including 138 that were speed-related (44 percent).

Teens and Speeding: Breaking the Deadly Cycle also sheds light on what we know about speeding-related fatal crashes

GHSA *Continued on page 7 >*

Schools across Michigan participating in teen safe driving program

S4SD  Students at 23 Michigan high schools will have the opportunity to become better, safer drivers by participating in the *Strive for a Safer Drive* (S4SD) program. S4SD, a peer-led traffic safety campaign, aims to reduce the leading cause of death for teens—traffic crashes.

In 2019, teens and young adults age 15 to 20 accounted for eight percent of all traffic deaths in Michigan, with 55.7 percent of those deaths being the driver. Inexperience and risk-taking behavior are the primary factors contributing to teen-driver fatalities.

In its 10th year, S4SD is a public-private partnership between Ford Motor Company Fund’s Driving Skills for Life program and the OHSP. The program encourages teens to talk to their peers and their communities about making safe driving choices.

As part of the S4SD program, each school receives \$1,000 for students to create a teen-led traffic safety campaign to educate their classmates and the community about various topics, including distracted driving, seat belt use, speeding, underage drinking/impaired driving, and winter driving.

This project does not need face-to-face instruction to be effective as it can be done successfully in a virtual environment.

Schools will submit a video or PowerPoint outlining their campaign. Those schools with the top-five winning campaigns will receive cash prizes ranging from \$500-\$1,500.

Since the 2011 creation of S4SD, 173 different Michigan high schools have participated in the program.

The OHSP has partnered with the Transportation Improvement Association to coordinate activities of the S4SD program.

For more information about S4SD, please visit Michigan.gov/S4SD.

THE S4SD HIGH SCHOOLS FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR ARE:

SCHOOL	COUNTY
Anchor Bay High School	St. Clair
Bay-Arenac Career Center Law Enforcement	Bay & Arenac
Carlson High School	Wayne
Cousino High School	Macomb
Dakota High School	Macomb
Detroit Community Schools	Wayne
Dexter High School	Washtenaw
Dundee High School	Monroe
Fordson High School	Wayne
Freeland High School	Saginaw
Grand Blanc High School	Genesee
Grand Ledge High School	Eaton
Harper Creek High School	Calhoun
Lake Orion High School	Oakland
Memphis High School	Macomb & St. Clair
Ontonagon Area Schools	Ontonagon
Plymouth High School	Oakland
Pottersville High School	Eaton
Port Huron Northern High School	St. Clair
Swan Valley High School	Saginaw
University High School Ferndale	Oakland
Vassar High School	Tuscola
West Shore ESD CTE	Mason



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Impaired driving task force making IMPACT

Armed with alarming impaired-driving data, the MSP recently joined with MSP Third District leadership and its troopers to create the Impaired Driving Action Team (IMPACT), a task force focused on reducing alcohol- and drug-related crashes.

More than a third of traffic deaths in Michigan involve impaired drivers. To save lives, the IMPACT squad has been patrolling roads in Bay, Saginaw and Genesee counties to deter drivers who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

To raise awareness about this vital issue and to inform the public about the patrols, the OHSP deployed an outreach plan that included billboards located in numerous locations throughout the tri-county region, an extensive radio campaign, and

multi-platform social media posts. The OHSP also created and distributed posters that were placed in local bars, restaurants, gas stations, convenience stores and marijuana dispensaries.

Operating with two troopers and one sergeant, in January and February the IMPACT task force made 36 OWI and 12 OUID arrests.

The stops also included 31 people driving with a suspended license, 6 with no insurance, 1 felony firearm, 1 felony in possession of ammunition, and 4 open container violations. Also included were 21 satisfied warrants and the capture of 10 fugitives.

In one day of exceptional work, the team arrested seven OWI/OUID drivers in Saginaw County on March 20, 2021.

200 arrested *Continued from page 1 >* speeding citations, 88 seat belt citations, and 13 child-restraint citations. In addition, officers made 147 felony arrests during the enforcement period.

In one instance, a trooper from the MSP Flint Post responded to a road-rage incident in progress, which led to the arrest of a suspect for two counts of felonious assault, CCW (firearm), possession of a firearm with unlawful intent, multiple counts of felony firearm, and possession of Adderall.

According to the 2019 Michigan Annual Drunk Driving Audit by the MSP, 41.9 percent of all fatal crashes that occurred involved alcohol, drugs, or both.

In Michigan, it is illegal to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher, although motorists can be arrested at any BAC level if an officer believes they are impaired. Michigan's drunk driving law contains a zero-tolerance provision for drivers with certain illegal drugs in their system.

The same penalties for drunk driving also apply to those convicted under the zero-tolerance drug provision.

The *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaign is supported with federal traffic safety funds provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and coordinated by the OHSP.

Deaths *Continued from page 1 >* estimates that 4.8 million people were injured in crashes last year.

Federal data shows that Americans drove 13 percent fewer miles last year, or roughly 2.8 trillion miles. Yet the number of deaths rose at an alarming rate, he said.

Of the reckless behaviors, early data from the NHTSA show speed to be the top factor.

Also, tests of trauma center patients involved in traffic crashes show increased use of alcohol, marijuana and opioids.

Traveling over 100 mph makes crashes far more severe, the safety council said.

The high number of speeding drivers is continuing even as traffic is starting to return to pre-pandemic levels.

The council collects fatal crash data from states on public and private roads.





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A "Drive Slow on Ice & Snow" banner located northbound on I-75 near the Mackinac Bridge.

OHSP launches expanded winter safe driving awareness campaign

In November 2020, the Michigan OHSP launched its winter driving safety campaign—*Drive Slow on Ice & Snow*—to remind drivers to reduce speed and use caution when traveling on slick and snow-covered roads.

Of the more than 1.5 million total crashes reported in Michigan from 2015-2019, 14.2 percent (220,526) were winter-weather related, according to the MSP Criminal Justice Information Center. Of those crashes on icy, snowy, or slushy road conditions, 361 involved fatalities in which 402 people lost their lives.

The OHSP expanded its winter driving safety outreach with a new website containing tips and useful resources. When drivers visit www.michigan.gov/WinterDriving, they can find advice addressing a wide range of cold-weather challenges, including: planning a safe route, how to control their vehicle, what to do in an emergency, passenger safety, tire tips and more.

The OHSP also distributed *Drive Slow on Ice & Snow* banners to more than 600 traffic safety partners throughout the state to promote winter driving safety in their communities.

The *Drive Slow on Ice & Snow* campaign is supported by federal traffic safety funds.



Staff Profile: Julie Roth

Julie Roth is the program coordinator for the 416/Secondary Road Patrol program. She has been with the OHSP for 16 years.

What do you like most about your job?

The wide variety of duties—program management, accounting, monitoring, training, patrol ride-alongs. It never gets boring.

What are you most proud of at work?

Working with all 83 sheriffs' offices across the entire state ... being there to assist and come up with solutions to help.

What are your interests and hobbies?

I'm a single mother of two kids and work with 83 sheriffs ... do I have time for interests and hobbies?! My nerdy secret is that I enjoy entering my photography, art and baking at the county fair.

What personal achievement are you most proud of?

Making Jeff Foxworthy bust a gut laughing.

What's your favorite vacation spot?

The South.

What's something people don't know about you?

In middle school I played on the boys' baseball team—Bad News Bears style!



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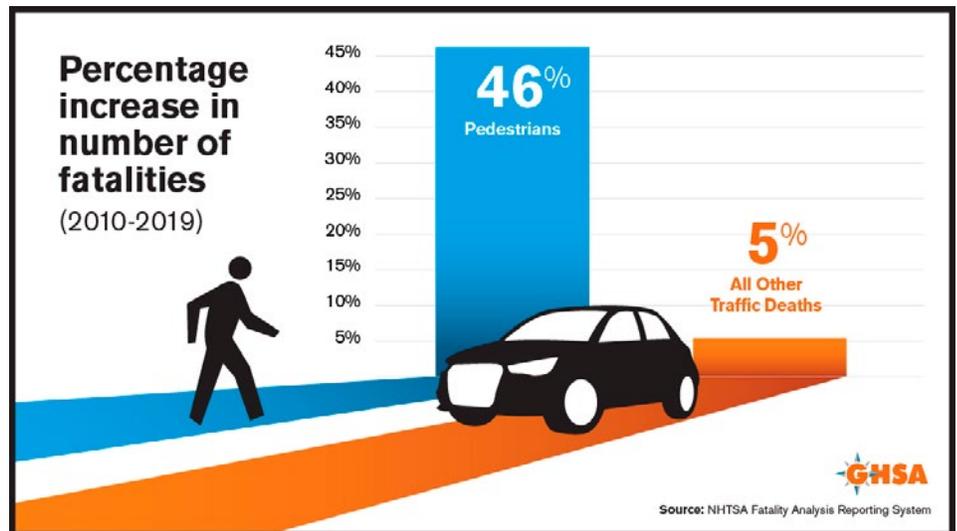
Peds Continued from page 1 >

analysis found that from January through June 2020, 2,957 pedestrians were killed in motor vehicle crashes—six more than the same period in 2019. Factoring in a 16.5-percent reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) nationwide, the rate of drivers striking and killing pedestrians jumped to 2.2 deaths per billion VMT, a significant and unsettling increase from 1.8 deaths the year before.

If this troubling pattern continues for the second half of the year as many traffic safety experts fear, 2020 may have the largest ever annual increase in the U.S. pedestrian fatality rate per mile driven.

In Michigan, from January to June 2019, there were 65 pedestrian fatalities. According to preliminary data from GHSA, in that same six-month period in 2020, there were 68 pedestrian fatalities.

The GHSA report also examines 2019 data from the NHTSA's Fatality Analysis



Reporting System (FARS), finding that pedestrians accounted for 17 percent of all traffic deaths in 2019, compared to 13 percent in 2010. While pedestrian deaths have risen by 46 percent over the past decade, the number of all other traffic deaths has increased by only 5 percent. Although advancements in motor vehicle safety and technology have increased survivability for vehicle occupants involved in crashes, pedestrians are not so protected and remain susceptible to serious or fatal injuries when struck by a motor vehicle.

The 2019 FARS data analysis highlights numerous factors related to pedestrian fatalities. Key findings include:

- Most pedestrians are killed on local roads, in the dark and away from intersections, suggesting the need for safer road crossings and increased efforts

to make pedestrians more visible through improved lighting and other countermeasures. During the past 10 years, the number of drivers striking and killing a pedestrian after dark increased by 54 percent, compared to a 16 percent rise in pedestrian fatalities in daylight.

- Alcohol impairment by the driver and/or pedestrian was reported in nearly half of traffic crashes that resulted in a pedestrian fatality.

Despite the alarming projected increase in the pedestrian death rate per mile driven in the first half of 2020, the report identifies progress in some state-reported data. For example, 20 states and D.C. saw declines in the number of pedestrians killed by drivers for the first half of 2020 compared to 2019, with 9 states reporting double-digit decreases and 2 states reporting three consecutive years of decreases.

The report also highlights proven strategies employed at the state and local level, including engineering and road design, high visibility and automated enforcement, pedestrian safety assessments and road safety audits, and education directed to children and crash bystanders.

The full report, including infographics and state-by-state data, is available on the GHSA website at [GHSA.org](https://ghsa.org).



OHSP welcomes Heidi Parker

Heidi Parker is OHSP's new accountant in the Fiscal Management Section. She will be responsible for the analysis of financial transactions for all federal grant programs.

Prior to joining OHSP, Heidi worked in the Michigan Department of Natural Resource's Minerals Management Section as the revenue accountant.

Heidi has a bachelor's degree in accounting from Western Governor's University and lives in Lansing.



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Kratom and driving bring another danger to our roads

By: Kenneth Stecker and Kinga Canike

Most everyone knows the dangers of drinking and driving, but recent headlines have put the spotlight on another danger on our roads—kratom and driving:

“Suspected driving under the Influence case involving Mitragyine.”¹

“Deputies say DUI driver carrying new Kratom drug.”²

“DUI suspect in Danish child’s death back in Charleston jail after failed drug test.”³

Mitragyna speciosa is an evergreen tree native to Thailand and Southeast Asia.⁴ Its leaves, and an extract made from its leaves, are commonly referred to as kratom.⁵ Kratom can be used in various ways. Its leaves can be chewed or crushed into a powder.⁶ The powder can be used to make tea or packaged as capsules.⁷ Kratom extract can be mixed into liquids for consumption.⁸

Kratom’s effects vary depending on how much a person ingests. In lower doses, kratom is known to be a stimulant.⁹ In higher doses, those effects are opioid-like or sedative.¹⁰ Kratom has been used for many purposes including opioid withdrawal, pain relief, and to treat depression and anxiety.¹¹ However, research is inconclusive as to whether kratom has any health benefits.¹²

The American Kratom Society estimated that there were more than 15 million kratom users in the United States in 2019.¹³ Kratom is not federally scheduled as a controlled substance even though the Drug Enforcement Administration has listed it as a drug of concern.¹⁴ There is concern that lack of regulation results in varying quality and purity among kratom products.¹⁵ Six states have made it illegal, and there is pending legislation in other states to either criminalize or regulate it to some degree.¹⁶ Here in Michigan kratom continues to be legal and, therefore, readily accessible.¹⁷ It is sold on the Internet and at gas stations and head shops around the state.

Common kratom side effects include the following:

- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Hallucinations and delusion
- Depression
- Breathing suppression
- Seizure, coma, and death.¹⁸

These side effects, which can last up to five hours, make the combination of kratom and driving dangerous.¹⁹ This is where Michigan Public Act 543, which went into effect in 2013, comes into play.

Public Act 543 states in pertinent part as follows:

“Sec. 625. (1) A person, whether licensed or not, shall not operate a vehicle upon a highway or other place open to the general public or generally accessible to motor vehicles, including an

area designated for the parking of vehicles, within this state if the person is operating while intoxicated. As used in this section, “operating while intoxicated” means any of the following:

(a) The person is under the influence of alcoholic liquor, a controlled substance, or other intoxicating substance or a combination of alcoholic liquor, a controlled substance, or other intoxicating substance.

(25) As used in this section: (a) “Intoxicating substance” means any substance, preparation, or a combination of substances and preparations other than alcohol or a controlled substance, that is either of the following: (i) Recognized as a drug in any of the following publications or their supplements: (A) The official United States pharmacopoeia. (B) The official homeopathic pharmacopoeia of the United States. (C) The official national formulary. (ii) A substance, other than food, taken into a person’s body, including, but not limited to, vapors or fumes, that is used in a manner or for a purpose for which it was not

Kratom Continued on page 7 >

1 <https://academic.oup.com/jat/article/42/7/e65/4989296>

2 <https://speciosa.org/deputies-say-dui-driver-carrying-new-kratom-drug-written-by-treidherald-review-com217-421-7977/>

3 <https://abcnews4.com/news/crime-news/dui-suspect-in-danish-childs-death-back-in-charleston-jail-after-failed-drug-test>

4 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/kratom/art-20402171>

5 *Id.*

6 *Id.*

7 *Id.*

8 *Id.*

9 <https://jaoa.org/article.aspx?articleid=2094342>

10 *Id.*

11 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kratom-poison-control-calls-soared-in-recent-years/>

12 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/kratom/art-20402171>

13 https://www.amerikanratom.org/images/Kratom_Population_2019.pdf

14 <https://drugabuse.com/blog/trading-dependencies-theres-nothing-mild-about-a-kratom-addiction/>

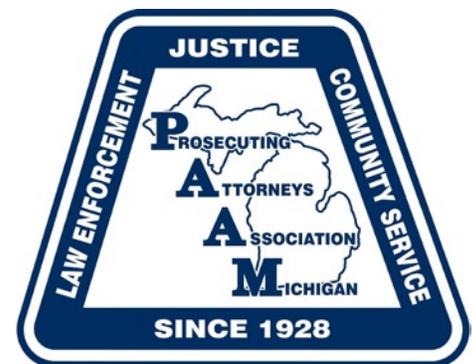
15 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kratom-poison-control-calls-soared-in-recent-years/>

16 https://speciosaguide.com/kratom-legality-is-kratom-legal-in-my-state/#Is_Kratom_Legal_in_Michigan

17 *Id.*

18 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/kratom/art-20402171>

19 *Id.*



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Kratom *Continued from page 6 >*

intended, and that may result in a condition of intoxication.²⁰

Because kratom falls under the category of “intoxicating substance,” a person violates this law only when he or she operates a motor vehicle while under the influence by an intoxicating substance.²¹

Michigan Criminal Jury Instruction 15.3 defines “Under the influence” as follows:

“Under the influence of [alcohol / a controlled substance / an intoxicating substance] means that because of [drinking alcohol / using or consuming a controlled substance / consuming or taking into (his / her) body an intoxicating substance], the defendant’s ability to operate a motor vehicle in a normal manner was substantially lessened. To be under the influence, a person does not have to be falling down or hardly able to stand up. On the other hand, just because a person has [drunk alcohol or smells of alcohol / consumed or used a controlled

substance / consumed or used an intoxicating substance] does not prove, by itself, that the person is under the influence of [alcohol / a controlled substance / an intoxicating substance]. The test is whether, because of [drinking alcohol / using or consuming a controlled substance / consuming or taking into (his / her) body an intoxicating substance], the defendant’s mental or physical condition was significantly affected and the defendant was no longer able to operate a vehicle in a normal manner.”²²

During an impaired driving investigation, if a police officer has probable cause to believe a driver is under the influence of kratom, that driver can be arrested. To establish probable cause that a driver may be under the influence of kratom, the officer should look for the general indicators of kratom. According to a 2018 study

²² https://courts.michigan.gov/Courts/MichiganSupremeCourt/criminal-jury-instructions/Documents/HTML/Criminal%20Jury%20Instructions-Responsive%20HTML5/index.html#t=Criminal_Jury_Instructions%2FCrim_Jury_Ch_15%2FM_Crim_Jl_15_2_Operating_While_Intoxicated_OWI.htm

in the Journal of Analytical Toxicology, some of these general indicators may include “leg tremors, continual clenching fingers and hands, fidgety and exaggerated movements, slurred and rapid speech, and dilated pupils.”²³ In addition, a Drug Recognition Expert-trained officer should be called to evaluate any suspect who may be under the influence of kratom or any other controlled or intoxicating substance.

We are always reassessing efforts to combat the dangers on our roads. One way we can make a difference is by making sure those drivers under the influence of kratom are kept off them.

For more information on this article and PAAM training programs, contact Kenneth Stecker or Kinga Gorzelewski Canike, Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors, at 517-334-6060 or e-mail at steckerk@michigan.gov or gorzelewskik@michigan.gov. Please consult your prosecutor before adopting practices suggested by reports in this article. Discuss your practices that relate to this article with your commanding officers, police legal advisors, and the prosecuting attorney before changing your practice.

²³ <https://academic.oup.com/jat/article/42/7/e65/4989296>

²⁰ MCL 257.625, et. al.

²¹ MCLA 257.625(1)(a)

S4SD *Continued from page 2 >*

involving teens—the driver is more likely to be male, have run off the road or rolled the vehicle and be unbuckled. The data analysis was conducted by Richard Retting of Sam Schwartz Consulting.

This examination of teen driving deaths is especially timely. Crashes have spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic and speeding on less-crowded than normal roadways is cited by states as a major factor in the surge in motor vehicle deaths. Parents may also have less time to spend training their teen drivers given other priorities during the pandemic.

To read the report, visit www.ghsa.org/resources/Teens-and-Speeding-Report21.

In fatal speeding-related crashes with teen drivers:

- The risk increases exponentially with **each additional peer** in the vehicle
- The driver is more likely to be male (37% versus 28%)

Source: FARS

GHSA FORD MOTOR COMPANY FUND