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## Montana has high rate of deaths from alcohol-related crashes

By TED SULLIVAN, Chronicle Staff Writer

Montana was one of the deadliest states in the country last year for fatalities stemming from alcohol-related crashes, according to a traffic-safety advocacy group.

The physician-led End Needless Death on Our Roadways group and the National Safety Council issued their annual list of the 15 deadliest American states and territories for impaired driving last week. To qualify, 41 percent or more of all traffic fatalities in a state must involve alcohol.

Montana ranked third on the list, and it made the list for the second straight year.

No. 1 was Rhode Island.

No. 2 was Puerto Rico.

Nearly 17,000 motorists were killed nationwide in alcohol-related traffic crashes in 2004, according to the report. Nearly 6,000 of those fatalities occurred in the fifteen states. Montana-specific numbers weren't available.

In addition, more than 2,000 of those who died nationwide were teenagers.

"Motorists are facing an epidemic of death on our roadways, and tragically many of these fatalities and serious injuries could have been prevented," Dr. Andrea Barthwell, co-chairperson of ENDOR, said in a press release.



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"We urge leaders in these states and around the country to dedicate themselves to exploring new and innovative strategies for addressing impaired and other dangerous driving behaviors."



Other states included on the list for two years straight were: Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin.

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