

# R.I. Tops Alcohol Related Fatalities List

12/9/2004

A report compiled by the national physicians' group End Needless Death on Our Roadways (END) finds that Rhode Island leads all other U.S. states in the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities, ABC News reported Dec. 7.

The report identifies the 15 deadliest states based on alcohol-related fatalities. In Rhode Island, 55 percent of all traffic deaths last year were alcohol-related. Hawaii was second with 53 percent.

Other states with a high percentage of alcohol-related deaths in 2003 were Nevada, 50 percent; North Dakota, 50 percent; South Carolina, 50 percent; Montana, 49 percent; South Dakota, 48 percent; Texas, 47 percent; Wisconsin, 46 percent; Connecticut, 45 percent; Louisiana, 45 percent; Massachusetts, 45 percent; New Mexico, 45 percent; Illinois, 44 percent; and Kansas, 44 percent.

The state with the lowest percentage of alcohol-related traffic fatalities was Utah at 15 percent, far below the national average of 40 percent.

END is urging the "Fatal Fifteen" states to form task forces to discuss and recommend ways to reduce drunk driving.

The report was based on data from the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#).

## FATAL FIFTEEN

States with highest percentage of alcohol-related traffic deaths in 2003:

1. Rhode Island 55 percent	6. Montana 49	11. Louisiana 45
2. Hawaii 53	7. South Dakota 48	12. Massachusetts 45
3. Nevada 50	8. Texas 47	13. New Mexico 45
4. North Dakota 50	9. Wisconsin 46	14. Illinois 44
5. South Carolina 50	10. Connecticut 45	15. Kansas 44

National average: 40

Source: [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#); End Needless Death on Our Roadways

(Copyright 2004 by The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved.)

---

### *Alcohol Fatalities*

## Montana, Mississippi, South Dakota and New Mexico DWI Fatality Rate Highest in U.S.

By Barry Massey

SANTA FE - People in New Mexico are nearly twice as likely to die in an alcohol-related traffic accident than the national average, according to new figures that underscore the state's struggle with drunken driving.

Although New Mexico reduced its rate of alcohol-involved highway deaths in 2000, the state continues to have one of the nation's worst problems with drinking and driving.

New Mexico ranked fourth highest in the nation in the rate of alcohol-involved highway deaths unchanged from its rankings in 1999 and 1998, according to figures released by the DWI Resource Center in Albuquerque.

The state's alcohol-related crash death rate declined by nearly 10 percent from 1999 to 2000.

"I'm always disappointed when we can't drop out of the top 10," said Linda Atkinson, the DWI Resource Center's executive director.

"It almost feels that New Mexico has normalized dying in a DWI crash being involved in a DWI crash or arrest. I see us having a very long road to go."

Throughout the 1990s, New Mexico has remained at or near the top of national rankings. It was first in 1990-93, dropping to second in 1994-95, back first in 1996; third in 1997, and fourth in 1998-99.

New Mexico overhauled its drunken driving laws in 1993, and most of the tougher penalties went into effect the following year.

There were 8.7 deaths in alcohol-related highway accidents for every 100,000 people in New Mexico in 2000, up from 9.7 in 1999. The rate also was 8.7 in 1998.

The national average rate increased slightly during the same period. There were 4.6 alcohol-related crash deaths per 100,000 population nationally in 2000, compared with 4.5 in 1999.

Michael Sandoval, director for public education programs in the state Traffic Safety Bureau, said the agency remains committed to reducing alcohol-involved highway deaths.

The agency's main efforts to deal with the problem, he said, continue to be law enforcement against drunken driving and prevention programs.

"We're doing it the best we can. I wouldn't say we have backed off in any way," said Sandoval.

He also pointed out that, in general, the fatality rate has dropped in New Mexico despite no improvement in the state's national rankings in recent years.

The death rate for alcohol-involved highway crashes in New Mexico has declined by half from 1990 to 2000. The rate dropped annually from 1992 through 1994, but increased in 1995 and then held steady in 1996. It declined for two years before jumping up in 1999.

The nation's worst alcohol-related traffic death rate in 2000 was in Montana, 10.2 deaths per 100,000 population; followed by Mississippi, at 10.16; South Dakota, 8.744; and New Mexico, 8.741. West Virginia ranked behind New Mexico with a death rate of 8.24.

New Mexico had a higher rate of alcohol-related traffic deaths than its neighboring states in 2000: Texas

ranked 12th, 6.95 deaths per 100,000 people; Arizona, 14th, 6.9; Oklahoma, 25th, 4.9; Colorado, 26th, 4.6; and Utah, 44th, 3.05.

The latest rankings are based on traffic death information from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and 2000 population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau. The federal agency uses traffic crash information from states and then adjusts the data to try to provide a uniform state-to-state statistical yardstick.

New Mexico also has one of the nation's highest rates for total traffic deaths sixth in 2000, with 23.6 deaths per 100,000 people, down from 26.4 in 1999. The national traffic death rate was 14.9 deaths per 100,000 population.

"There aren't as many people being killed today as 13 years ago when I got involved but there are still way too many," said Atkinson.

"We have about 17,000 people killed every year in drunk driving crashes (nationally involving any amount of alcohol), but because they don't happen in one place there is no declaration of war. It's just a silent battle that goes on."

**Table 6. Traffic Fatalities by State and Highest Blood Alcohol Concentration in the Crash, 2002**

State	Total Fatalities	No Alcohol (BAC = 0.00 g/dl)		Low Alcohol (BAC = 0.01-0.07 g/dl)		High Alcohol (BAC ≥ 0.08 g/dl)		Any Alcohol (BAC ≥ 0.01 g/dl)	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Alabama	1,033	620	60	43	4	370	36	413	40
Alaska	87	52	59	2	2	34	39	35	41
Arizona	1,117	640	57	58	5	420	38	477	43
Arkansas	640	398	62	35	5	207	32	242	38
California	4,078	2,466	60	300	7	1,312	32	1,612	40
Colorado	742	435	59	39	5	268	36	307	41
Connecticut	322	182	57	17	5	123	38	140	43
Delaware	124	73	59	8	6	43	34	51	41
District of Columbia	47	22	48	3	5	22	47	25	52
Florida	3,132	1,856	59	177	6	1,099	35	1,276	41
Georgia	1,523	994	65	90	6	439	29	529	35
Hawaii	119	69	58	10	8	41	34	50	42
Idaho	264	173	66	17	7	74	28	91	34
Illinois	1,411	763	54	97	7	552	39	648	46
Indiana	792	523	66	46	6	223	28	269	34
Iowa	404	273	68	24	6	107	27	131	32
Kansas	512	283	55	23	5	205	40	229	45
Kentucky	915	614	67	39	4	263	29	301	33
Louisiana	875	462	53	62	7	351	40	413	47
Maine	216	165	76	4	2	47	22	51	24
Maryland	659	394	60	49	7	216	33	265	40
Massachusetts	459	238	52	30	6	192	42	221	48
Michigan	1,277	787	62	68	5	422	33	490	38
Minnesota	657	402	61	46	7	209	32	255	39
Mississippi	885	553	62	41	5	292	33	332	38
Missouri	1,208	683	57	68	6	457	38	525	43
Montana	270	143	53	21	8	106	39	127	47
Nebraska	307	190	62	21	7	97	31	117	38
Nevada	381	210	55	23	6	148	39	171	45
New Hampshire	127	76	60	5	4	46	36	51	40
New Jersey	773	474	61	45	6	254	33	299	39
New Mexico	449	234	52	27	6	189	42	215	48
New York	1,522	1,044	69	77	5	400	26	478	31
North Carolina	1,575	974	62	67	4	533	34	601	38
North Dakota	97	49	50	8	8	40	41	48	50

Ohio	1,418	856	60	66	5	496	35	562	40
Oklahoma	734	485	66	35	5	215	29	249	34
Oregon	436	257	59	26	6	153	35	179	41
Pennsylvania	1,614	958	59	88	5	568	35	656	41
Rhode Island	84	38	45	8	9	38	45	46	55
South Carolina	1,053	502	48	64	6	487	46	551	52
South Dakota	180	88	49	13	7	80	44	92	51
Tennessee	1,175	704	60	61	5	410	35	471	40
Texas	3,725	1,980	53	194	5	1,551	42	1,745	47
Utah	328	255	78	7	2	67	20	73	22
Vermont	78	51	65	5	6	22	28	27	35
Virginia	914	544	59	48	5	323	35	371	41
Washington	659	361	55	32	5	265	40	298	45
West Virginia	439	259	59	20	5	160	36	180	41
Wisconsin	803	440	55	39	5	325	40	364	45
Wyoming	176	107	61	7	4	62	35	70	39
U.S. Total	42,815	25,396	59	2,401	6	15,019	35	17,419	41
Puerto Rico	510	270	53	42	8	199	39	241	47

Note: Percentages are calculated from unrounded data. Totals may not equal sum of components due to independent rounding.

[MENU](#) | [What's New](#) | [Old WN](#) | [Educ](#) | [Lawyers](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Alcohol](#) | [DMV](#) | [Insurance](#) | [Accidents](#) | [Links](#) | [email](#) | [Main Page](#)