



## ***AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety Report Summary - Pedestrian Fatalities on Interstate Highways: Characteristics & Countermeasures***

In 1995, 543 people were killed while *on foot* on an Interstate highway! Pedestrian fatalities on Interstates have claimed an average of 610 lives each year since 1989.<sup>(1)</sup> Nearly 10 percent of all the nation's pedestrian fatalities occur on Interstate highways, even though the Interstate system comprises only about one percent of the nation's total road mileage. Furthermore, 12 percent of all Interstate traffic fatalities are pedestrians. These are alarming numbers, especially given that pedestrians are legally restricted from entering Interstate highways in all but ten states.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's staff research analyst Christopher Johnson looked at a three-year sample of 400 police accident reports detailing Interstate pedestrian fatalities in Texas, Missouri, and North Carolina to find out what pedestrians are doing on the Interstates and what factors are contributing to the crashes. Nearly one-third of the crashes from the sample involved "unintended pedestrians": people pushing or working on a vehicle, involved in a previous crash, or walking on the shoulder, all situations in which the average motorist could be involved. Forty percent of the crashes involved pedestrians crossing or entering a lane of traffic. These cases usually involved people exhibiting irrational or suicidal behavior, or simply trying to travel the shortest distance from one location to another. Less than 3 percent of the pedestrians in the sample were reported to be hitch hiking. Construction workers were involved in less than one percent of the crashes. The following table summarizes the different crash-types from the sample and relative percentages:

**TABLE 1. What Pedestrians Were Doing at Interstate Pedestrian Fatalities in Texas, Missouri, and North Carolina, 1991-93**

<b>What Pedestrian Was Doing</b>	<b>Number of Fatalities</b>	<b>Percentage of Fatalities</b>
<b>Crossing or Entering</b>	169	40.3
<b>Pushing or Working on Vehicle</b>	76	18.1
<b>Involved in Previous Crash</b>	31	6.4
<b>Walking/Standing on Shoulder</b>	27	7.4
<b>Getting On or Off Vehicle</b>	3	0.7
<b>Walking in Roadway With Traffic</b>	35	8.35
<b>Walking in Roadway Against Traffic</b>	11	2.63
<b>Standing/Lying in Roadway</b>	40	9.55
<b>Hitch Hiking</b>	11	2.63
<b>Other Working in Roadway (Construction)</b>	3	0.7
<b>Playing in Roadway</b>	1	0.2
<b>Not Known</b>	8	1.9
<b>Other</b>	4	1.0

One out of five drivers involved in an Interstate pedestrian fatality leaves the scene of the crash. In cases in which the pedestrian was struck on the shoulder of the Interstate, inattentive, impaired, or drowsy driving was often a factor. About 17% of the drivers involved were truck drivers.

Three out of four Interstate pedestrian fatalities occur after dark. Half occur in unlighted conditions. Visibility is a major contributing factor in these crashes. In many cases, drivers told police that they did not see the pedestrian until it was too late to react. Few Interstate pedestrian fatalities also involved driver fatalities.

The Foundation conducted a survey of state officials from the National Association of Governor's Highway Safety Representatives to find out what countermeasures are currently in place to help alleviate the Interstate pedestrian problem. Most states have some limited countermeasures aimed at keeping pedestrians off of the Interstates. Signs indicating pedestrian access restrictions are posted at all Interstate entry points in 25 states, and at some entry points in 16 states. Interstate overpasses have been built in 13 states in the past five years.

Several states also have countermeasures aimed at the "unintended pedestrian" whose car has broken down or has been involved in a previous crash. Emergency call boxes are in place in 13 states, primarily in urban areas. Many state representatives also responded that emergency cell phone numbers are now in place that motorists can call to report broken down vehicles and crashes. Roving roadside assistance vehicles operate in 31 states, primarily during peak traffic hours in congested urban areas. Police officers often take on this duty as well. Virtually all respondents answered that officers stopped most of the time when spotting a pedestrian on the Interstate.

Signs warning drivers at sections of the Interstate where pedestrians frequently cross have also been posted in some states, notably in southern California where undocumented alien crossings are common.

The typical pedestrian involved is a male, 25-34 years old, wearing dark clothing. More than 40 percent of fatal Interstate pedestrian crashes nationwide involve pedestrians with positive blood alcohol levels. Of those, 4 out of 5 have blood alcohol levels greater than .10, more than the legal limit for driving a car in every state. 97% of the fatalities in the sample involving a drinking pedestrian occurred after dark and in the roadway (as opposed to on the shoulder). Only 75% of sober pedestrians were struck in these circumstances. In Texas, the average blood alcohol content of a drunk pedestrian was .20.

Further research is necessary to find out which countermeasures are most effective, but motorists can take measures to keep themselves out of danger in the event of a break down on the Interstate. They should prepare themselves for emergency situations by carrying equipment that will make them visible to passing traffic -- flares and retro-reflective clothing. Always pull over to the far right side of the shoulder if you must stop. Never step into a moving lane of high-speed traffic. In some situations, you are better off staying in your car and waiting for help to arrive.

Which states have the worst problem? Texas, New Mexico, Delaware, Nevada, and Missouri ranked as the worst five states in the Foundation's study, with the most pedestrian fatalities per Interstate vehicle mile traveled (a measure of the expected number of "unintended pedestrians" on the Interstates in a given state). The following chart shows the relative rankings of each state, along with the total number of Interstate pedestrian fatalities recorded in each state from 1992-1994:

**TABLE 2. State Rankings: Interstate Pedestrian  
Fatalities per 100 Million Interstate Highway  
Vehicle Miles Traveled by State<sup>(2)</sup>**

<b>State</b>	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Total IH Ped Fatalities 1992-94</b>	<b>IH VMT 1992-94</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
TX	1	298	1134.95	.263
NM	2	34	154.42	.220
DE	3	6	30.46	.197
NV	4	17	87.16	.195
MO	5	68	444.56	.153
LA	6	39	256.43	.147
MT	7	9	63.60	.142
DC	8	2	14.23	.141
OR	9	29	210.82	.138
SD	10	7	51.63	.136
CA	11	271	2021.49	.134
FL	12	86	669.07	.129
RI	13	7	54.52	.128
NJ	14	39	315.67	.124
AZ	15	31	258.42	.120
MS	16	16	136.50	.117
AK	17	4	35.52	.113
AL	18	30	273.22	.110
HI	19	5	45.89	.109
OK	20	24	223.41	.107

NY	21	63	600.29	.105
NC	22	39	374.64	.104
MD	23	36	370.50	.097
AR	24	15	154.69	.097
GA	25	61	635.21	.096
TN	26	39	414.05	.094
IL	27	64	707.28	.091
CT	28	21	247.28	.085
PA	29	42	495.06	.085
SC	30	22	261.54	.084
UT	31	15	179.07	.084
NE	32	7	84.73	.083
MI	33	44	560.54	.079
IA	34	12	156.51	.077
CO	35	17	234.61	.073
VA	36	36	498.64	.072
WV	37	8	128.78	.062
OH	38	46	751.47	.061
MA	39	24	395.14	.061
WA	40	22	371.36	.059
IN	41	22	397.37	.055
MN	42	15	271.28	.055
KS	43	8	149.63	.054
VT	44	2	39.62	.051

KY	45	13	281.36	.046
WY	46	2	61.28	.033
WI	47	5	225.32	.022
ME	48	1	66.89	.015
ID	49	1	74.25	.014
ND	50	0	37.14	.000
NH	51	0	63.77	.000