



## News Release

The Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety is providing a link of comments from Director Blackwood on the GHSAs Pedestrian Safety Report. Director Blackwood is also Vice-Chair for the Governors Highway Safety Association. Verbatim of his comment are at the bottom of this release from the GHSAs.

Link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/z8o2qzth5fq9iu/GHSAs%20Pedestrian%20Safety%20report%202018.mpg?dl=0>

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **No National Progress in Reducing Pedestrian Fatalities** *2017 Marks 2nd Year of 25-Year High Level of Deaths*

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSAs) projects nearly 6,000 pedestrians were killed in motor vehicle crashes in the U.S. in 2017, marking the second year in a row at numbers not seen in 25 years.

GHSAs annual *Spotlight on Highway Safety* provides the first glimpse at state and national trends in pedestrian traffic fatalities for 2017, using preliminary data provided by the highway safety offices in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Richard Retting of Sam Schwartz Consulting analyzed the data and authored the report.

"Two consecutive years of 6,000 pedestrian deaths is a red flag for all of us in the traffic safety community. These high levels are no longer a blip but unfortunately a sustained trend," GHSAs Executive Director Jonathan Adkins explains. "We can't afford to let this be the new normal."

States reported a total of 2,636 pedestrian fatalities for the first six months of 2017. Adjusting the raw data based on past data trends, GHSAs projects that pedestrian deaths in 2017 will total 5,984, essentially unchanged from 2016, in which 5,987 people on foot lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes. Pedestrians now account for approximately 16% of all motor vehicle deaths, compared with 11% just a few years ago.

Two recent trends present an interesting correlation with rising pedestrian fatalities: the growth in smartphone use nationally and the legalization of recreational marijuana in several states. While the report does not find or imply a definitive link between these factors and pedestrian deaths, it is widely accepted both smartphones and marijuana can impair the attention and judgment necessary to navigate roadways safely behind the wheel and on foot.

The reported number of smartphones in active use in the U.S. increased 236% from 2010 to 2016, and the number of cell phone-related emergency room visits is increasing as the devices become more prevalent in daily life.

The seven states and D.C. that legalized recreational marijuana use between 2012 and 2016 experienced a collective 16.4% increase in pedestrian fatalities for the first half of 2017, while all other states saw a combined 5.8% decrease.

As report author Retting notes, "This preliminary 2017 data is the first opportunity to look at marijuana-impairment as a possible contributing factor in pedestrian deaths, given the recent law changes. It's critical to use this early data to look for potential warning signs."

In addition to looking at pedestrian fatality crash characteristics, the report also discusses promising strategies to reduce pedestrian and motor vehicle crashes through a combination of engineering, education and enforcement efforts. It also outlines specific examples from 41 states such as: training law enforcement officers to understand and enforce laws aimed to protect pedestrians; collaboration between State Highway Safety Offices and state DOTs; and policy changes to prioritize safety for all road users, regardless of mode.

The full report, including state-by-state data and infographics, is available at <https://www.ghsa.org/resources/spotlight-pedestrians18>.

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### **About GHSA**

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) is a nonprofit association representing the highway safety offices of states, territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. GHSA provides leadership and representation for the states and territories to improve traffic safety, influence national policy, enhance program management and promote best practices. Its members are appointed by their Governors to administer federal and state highway safety funds and implement state highway safety plans. Contact GHSA at 202-789-0942 or visit [www.ghsa.org](http://www.ghsa.org). Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/GHSAHQ](https://www.facebook.com/GHSAHQ) or follow us on Twitter [@GHSAHQ](https://twitter.com/GHSAHQ).

Director Blackwood comments:

Cut 1: "As of today we have had two more pedestrian fatalities as we had at the same time last year. In other categories, we have actually gone down. It is disturbing to us. There are a lot of people who are stepping out in front of cars, buses and other things, plus they are not crossing at crosswalks. It is one of those things you scratch your head about and say why. Many of the fatalities happen within a few hundred feet of a well-marked and well-lit crosswalk but people are not using them."

Cut 2: "When people are walking and using their phones, there are people who will step out in front of a car because, again, they are not paying attention. There is no message that is worth your life and there is no message that is worth the life of somebody else. Put down those phones when you are walking. When you are driving. Pay attention to your surroundings. Do the right thing and be safe."

Cut 3: "There is a provision that you are not supposed to be a pedestrian on an interstate highway. Of course people do get out and check the condition of their car. Now if your car is catching on fire or if you smell smoke or smell something, yes get out of the car but go to the side of the highway. Get away from the road bed. People are out in the road and sometimes in the lane of traffic. People have been killed time and time again. Don't do it."

Cut 4: "If you see somebody in a crosswalk, it doesn't matter what the light says. If someone is in that crosswalk, you have to yield the right of way to them, even if the light in their direction is red. It is the law in the state of Georgia, and it happens all too often that people don't pay attention because they see a green light and they keep going."