- Restraint Usage Legislation
- Speed Limit Laws
- Vehicle Safety Designs
- Large-Truck Safety
- Air Bag Effectiveness

FARS data can be used to answer a multitude of questions concerning the safety of vehicles, drivers, traffic situations, roadways, and environmental conditions. FARS data is also used at the State level by the FARS analyst to respond to State safety issues.

What is the availability of FARS data?

FARS data has been available every year since FARS was established in 1975. Users can obtain FARS data in two ways:

- You can request specific data from NCSA, and there is no charge for most requests. You can generally expect an answer within two weeks, but more time may be required for more complex or lengthy requests.
- You can obtain a file on computer tape or CD-ROM in one of several formats amenable to analysis. This will enable you to process the data using your own computer system. Information on acquiring the tapes is available by contacting NCSA at the address listed at the end of the next section. FARS data can also be obtained from the FARS Web site at: **http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/**

Summaries of FARS data are published in various fact sheets and included in an annual report, which are available in hardcopy by request, and from NCSA's Web site.

The annual report contains a comprehensive analysis of the year's data and includes some past years' data with comparative analyses.

How is personal information in FARS data protected?

FARS data released to the public does not include any personal identifying information such as names, addresses, or social security numbers, and Vehicle Identification Numbers are truncated in public access files over the Internet. Thus any data kept in FARS files and available to the public fully conforms with Privacy Act laws.

Requests for tapes, reports, and information should be sent to:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
National Center for Statistics and Analysis
Information Services Branch, NPO-121
400 Seventh Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20590

or contact us at: **www.nhtsa.dot.gov**

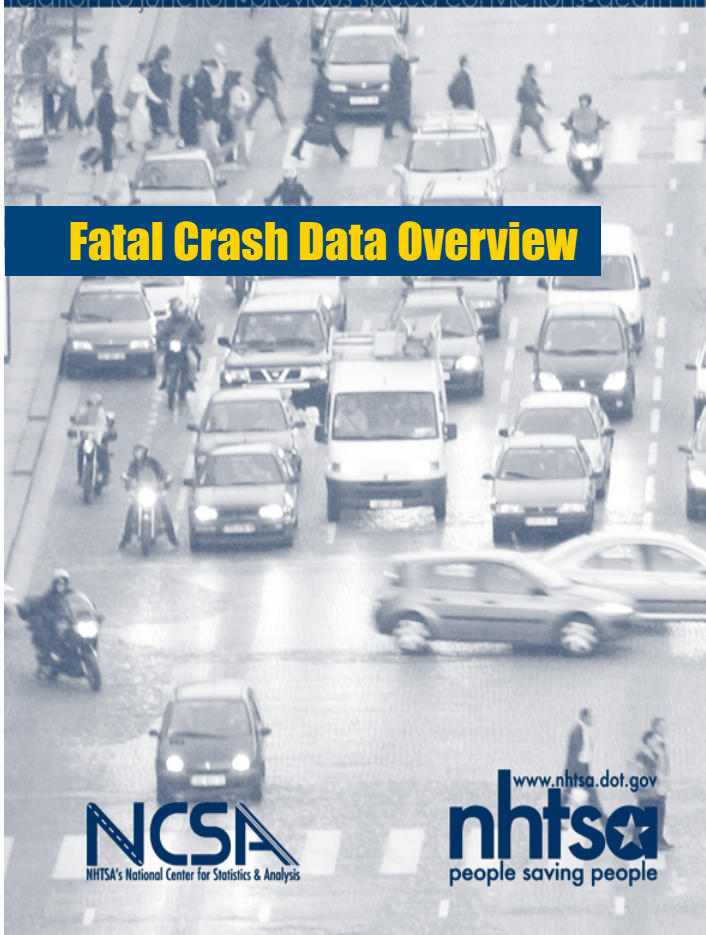
or call us at: 800-934-8517

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

DOT HS 809 726
Revised April 2005

Fatality Analysis Reporting System

Fatal Crash Data Overview



NCSA
NHTSA's National Center for Statistics & Analysis

www.nhtsa.dot.gov
nhtsa
people saving people

What is the Fatality Analysis Reporting System?

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) contains data derived from a census of fatal traffic crashes within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. To be included in FARS, a crash must involve a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public and result in the death of a person (occupant of a vehicle or a non-motorist) **within 30 days of the crash**.

FARS was conceived, designed, and developed by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (**NCSA**) of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 1975 to provide an overall measure of highway safety, to help identify traffic safety problems, to suggest solutions, and to help provide an objective basis to evaluate the effectiveness of motor vehicle safety standards and highway safety programs.

How does FARS work?

NHTSA/NCSA has a cooperative agreement with an agency in each State government to provide specific information in a standard format on fatal crashes occurring in the State. The agreements are managed by NCSA's FARS program manager, FARS Regional Operations Managers (**ROMs**), FARS IT program manager, and Regional Contracting Officer's Technical Representatives (**RCOTRs**) located in each of the 10 NHTSA Regional Offices.

The State employees who gather, translate, and transmit the data are called **FARS analysts**. The number of analysts in each State varies according to the State. Each FARS analyst attends formal training and is also trained on-the-job by other FARS analysts.

All FARS data on fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes is gathered from the State's own source documents and is coded on standard FARS forms. The analysts obtain the documents needed to complete the FARS forms, which generally include some or all of the following:

- Police Accident Reports
- State Vehicle Registration Files
- State Driver Licensing Files
- State Highway Department Data
- Vital Statistics
- Death Certificates
- Coroner/Medical Examiner Reports
- Hospital Medical Reports
- Emergency Medical Service Reports

Each FARS analyst enters coded data into a local computer; the data is then transmitted into NHTSA's central FARS computer database daily. The data is automatically checked online for acceptable range values and consistency, and again reviewed for quality upon arrival at NHTSA.

Range checks ensure that the codes submitted are valid. For example, a code "**4**" for the element "**Sex**" would be rejected by the system since "**1**" (male), "**2**" (female) and "**9**" (unknown) are the only valid codes.

Consistency checks ensure that no inconsistent data is entered. For example, if an analyst codes **11 a.m**. as the time of the crash and "**dusk**" as the light condition, these codes would be **rejected**, as they are inconsistent.

Quality control is a vital system feature. The checks just described are a major part of the overall quality control program. In addition, other checks for timeliness, completeness, and accuracy are carried out.

What data is included in FARS?

The FARS database contains descriptions, in standardized formats, of each fatal crash reported. Each crash has more than 125 different coded data elements that characterize the crash, the vehicles, and the people involved. The specific data elements may be modified slightly each year to conform to changing user needs, vehicle characteristics, and highway safety emphasis areas.

Coded Data Elements

All data elements are reported on four forms:

The Accident Form…
records specific information such as the time and location of the crash, whether a school bus was involved, the number of vehicles and people involved, weather conditions, and so on.

The Vehicle Form and Driver Form…
record data on each crash-involved vehicle and driver. Specific data includes the vehicle type, role in the crash, initial and principal impacts points, the most harmful event, the driver's record, and license status.

The Person Form…
records data on the people involved in the crash: their ages and genders, their roles in the crash (driver, passenger, non-motorist, or unknown), alcohol and drug involvement, injury severity, restraint usage, and so on.

Added Elements

Race, Ethnicity Information
Since 1999, FARS has recorded the **Race** and **Hispanic Origin** of *fatally injured* victims.

What uses can be made of FARS data?

NCSA is responsible for managing and operating FARS. FARS data is used extensively throughout NHTSA, and information requests are received from State and local governments, research organizations, members of the public, the auto and insurance industries, Congress, and the media. NCSA responds to more than 20,000 information requests and sends out hundreds of CDs of FARS data each year.

Examples of specific FARS data uses include the evaluation of:

- Alcohol-Related Legislation
- Motorcycle Helmet Legislation
- Repeat Offenders