



Report: Arizona's rural roads traffic fatality rate ranks eighth highest in the nation



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By: ABC15.com staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. - While traffic fatalities have recently decreased overall across America, Arizona's rural roads have seen an increase in traffic crashes and fatalities, according to a new report.

The report, "[Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland](#)," was released by [TRIP](#), a national non-profit transportation research group based out of Washington, D.C.

According to the report, crashes and fatalities on Arizona's rural roads are nearly three times higher than all other roads in the state.

TRIP reported that in 2009, Arizona's non-interstate rural roads had a traffic fatality rate of 2.78 deaths for every 100 million vehicle miles of travel. However, all other roads in Arizona had a fatality rate of 0.98 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.

According to the report, there were 807 traffic fatalities in Arizona in 2009. Of those, 314 were on rural, non-interstate roads.

TRIP found that factors such as "inadequate roadway safety design, longer emergency vehicle response times and the higher speeds traveled" played into the higher traffic fatality rate on Arizona's rural roads.

It defines "rural" as all places and people living outside urban areas of 5,000 or more.

The new report also found that roads and bridges across America in rural areas face a number of challenges, such as "inadequate capacity to handle the growing levels of traffic and commerce, limited connectivity, the inability to accommodate growing freight travel, deteriorated road and bridge conditions, a lack of desirable safety features, and a traffic fatality rate far higher than all other roads and highways."

"The safety and quality of life in America's small communities and rural areas and the health of the nation's economy ride on our rural transportation system. This backbone of the heartland allows mobility and connectivity for millions of rural Americans and provides crucial links from farm to market, moves manufactured and energy products, and provides access to countless tourist and recreational destinations," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "But, with long-term federal transportation legislation stuck in political gridlock in Washington, America's rural communities and economies could face even higher unemployment and decline. Funding the modernization of our rural transportation system will create jobs and help ensure long-term economic development and quality of life in rural America."

The TRIP report encourages America to adopt more policies that will improve rural transportation safety and conditions, that will in turn enhance the economy.

It points out possible solutions such as modernizing key routes, improving public transit access to rural areas, improving roadway safety and addressing funding of state and local transportation programs.

To read TRIP's entire report, [click here](#).