

Road fatalities see economical drop

By ACSH Staff — January 5, 2011

The CDC gives us some good news, but it is a silver cloud with a black lining — road fatalities have experienced the [largest reduction](#) ^[1] since World War II thanks in part to the poor economy. According to the report, U.S. road deaths dropped by 22 percent from from 43,510 to 33,963 between 2005 and 2009. The authors attribute this to “technological advances, primarily air bags, and the economic downturn.” The weak economy, they suggest, has reduced highway and rush hour traffic as local road traffic increased. The data also indicate that 42 percent more fatal car crashes are being caused by inattentive driving, particularly eating, using one’s cell phone and talking while driving.

A separate report by the CDC shows that [more drivers and passengers are buckling up](#) ^[2]. The latest statistics indicate that seat belt use is 85 percent in states where drivers can be pulled over for not wearing a seat belt. This compares to an 81 percent rate among drivers in 2001. States that only issue fines after drivers are pulled over for other violations averaged 79 percent.

New Hampshire is the only U.S. state where seat belt use is optional for those over the age of 18. “When they say, ‘Live free or die’, they mean it,” quips ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross.

ACSH’s Cheryl Martin points out that seat belt regulations are a good example of public health mandates that have actually had a really positive health impact, recalling a time when she and many others did not think to buckle up.

“These numbers are impressive,” says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, “but there is still room for massive improvement.”

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[1] <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE7034HE20110104>

[2] [http://blogs.wsj.com/health/2011/01/04/us-seat-belt-use-hits-85-but-cdc-says-more-need-to-buckle-](http://blogs.wsj.com/health/2011/01/04/us-seat-belt-use-hits-85-but-cdc-says-more-need-to-buckle-up/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+wsj%2Fhealth%2Ffeed+%28W)

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