



2018 Provisional Fatality Summary

Based on provisional data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), 2018 observed 962 fatal crashes with a total of 1,048 traffic fatalities. 2018 is the third year in a row with more than 1,000 traffic fatalities.

However, 2018 saw fewer fatalities than 2017. While there were 1,048 traffic deaths in 2018, there were 1,090 traffic deaths in 2017, making 2018 the first year since 2014 to deviate from an increasing trend of traffic fatalities.

In 2018, the most common type of collision was with a fixed object, constituting nearly 30 percent of traffic crashes. Other common types of fatal traffic collisions include pedestrian (15.3 percent), head-on (15.2 percent), and at an angle with another vehicle (8.9 percent). Nearly a quarter of all traffic fatalities in 2018 were related with improper seat belt use.

Fatal traffic crashes tend to involve only one vehicle, in which the vehicle typically would drift off

the lane or roadway and collide with an object or another vehicle. In fact, traffic crashes in Illinois between 2012 and 2016 revealed that over 55 percent of fatal crashes involved a single vehicle, but less than 30 percent of damage-only crashes involved a single vehicle.

Approximately 14 percent of fatalities were along Interstate routes, 35 percent along state routes, 19 percent along county or township roads, and 32 percent on local streets.

Additionally, of all of the drivers killed in 2018, at least 24 percent of all fatalities were related with drivers under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Thirty-four teen drivers were also killed in 2018. Of these, eight had a positive drug test result, and two had a nonzero blood alcohol content. However, because the provisional data does not include individuals involved in traffic crashes who were not killed, drunk drivers who may have caused fatal car crashes but survived are not included in this statistic, possibly underestimating the counts.

Source: Illinois Department of Transportation.

New Rules of the Road in 2019

Illinois roadway laws will become slightly stricter towards the state's effort to reduce dangerous traffic crashes. Many of these new laws have been passed in the past one to two years but will finally be enforced in 2019.

Among these new laws include an amendment that toughens the penalty for those caught texting and driving. First passed in 2014, a first texting-while-driving offense would be considered a non-moving violation and would not affect the driver's record. However, effective July 2019, the first offense will be considered a moving violation. A driver's license can be suspended if three moving violations are accrued within a 12-month period.

Source: CBS Chicago [1] [2].

Drivers can face a \$120 fine for improper use of the left lane in four-lane, two-way roadways. Illinois is particular about using the left lane solely to pass cars or to move over for emergency vehicles or for stopped vehicles. The law was first passed two years ago but will be fully enforced in 2019.

A new method of opening doors is now required to be included in the Illinois Rules of the Road. This new method, called the "Dutch Reach" method, involves opening the driver's door with the right hand. When parallel parking, the "Dutch Reach" method can decrease the likelihood of drivers opening doors to other vehicles or pedal-cyclists in motion and causing damage or injury.

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Last Month's Traffic Digest December, 2018

Fatal crashes: **63***
7 fewer than normal†

Total fatalities: **70***
8 fewer than normal†

* Provisional, subject to change
Source: IDOT

† Based on 2012–16 five-year means

NEWS THIS MONTH...

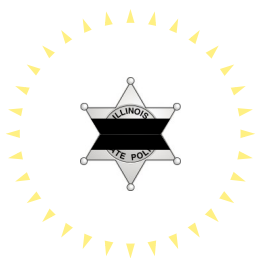
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2018 Holiday Crash Statistics

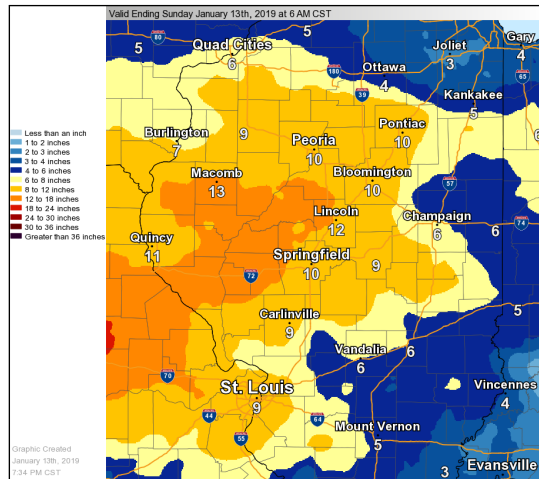
Provisional fatal traffic crash data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) reported 11 traffic fatalities during the Christmas holiday and three fatalities during the New Year holiday. With both holidays extending from the weekend into Tuesday for a 4.25-day weekend, this approximates to 2.59 and 0.71 fatalities per day for the Christmas and New Year holiday, respectively. These numbers bring some of the lowest fatal crash rates since Christmas of 2015.

Meanwhile, the Illinois State Police reported 37 DUI arrests during their holiday enforcement between December 17, 2018, and January 2, 2019. Many municipal police departments and county sheriffs across Illinois also reported their holiday enforcement numbers. For example, Lake County reported around 140 traffic stops, including two DUI arrests, 78 seat belt violations, and 40 speeding citations.

Source: Illinois Department of Transportation. Illinois State Police. [NW Herald](#).



First Snow of 2019 Impacts Entire State



Storm total snowfall reported the morning of January 13. Map source: NWS Lincoln.

A mid-January snowstorm brought several inches of snow to portions of Illinois south of Interstate 80 and west of Interstate 57, but its impact also spread into the Chicago area, with a total of two and a half inches of snow reported in Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

Source: [NWS Lincoln](#). [NWS Quad Cities](#). [NWS Chicago](#). [News Gazette](#). [NBC Chicago](#). [Belleville News-Democrat](#). [WQAD](#).

The worst of the snowfall impacted western Illinois, north of St. Louis and south of Burlington, Iowa, with snowfall reports ranging between 12 to 18 inches. While portions of central Missouri observed more than 18 inches of snow, the St. Louis area saw one of the heaviest snow events in six years with a total accumulation of up to one foot. The greatest snowfall observation in Illinois was 16 inches from Morgan County.

Throughout the state, snow plows struggled to keep up with clearing major roadways, and crashes were reported along several Interstate routes. During the snow event, police and emergency responders expressed difficulty in reaching the crash sites. A fatal crash was also reported along Interstate 294 involving a tollway snow plow. Public transportation services experienced significant delays, school events were postponed, and numerous flights were cancelled.

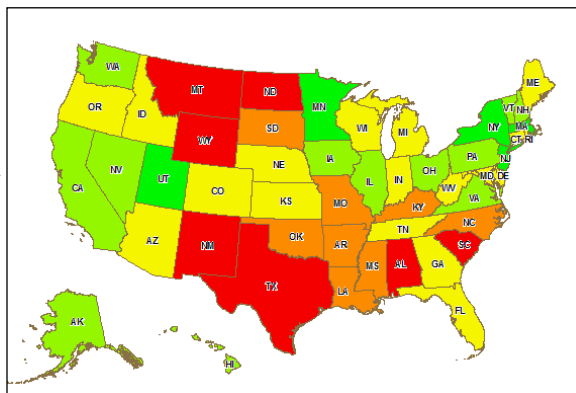
States Ranked by Drunk Driving Vulnerability

A recent study ranked states by the vulnerability to drunk-driving traffic crashes. By counting the number of traffic fatalities related with a drunk driver per population that were reported in 2017, Safewise found that southern states and rural Midwestern states ranked some of the

worst states for drunk driving deaths. The state with the worst fatality rate was Wyoming, and the state with the fewest alcohol-related traffic fatalities per population was Massachusetts.

In addition to the spatial patterns, the study found

Source: [Safewise](#).



States ranked by alcohol-related traffic fatalities per capita, with green (red) indicating low (high) crash densities. Data source: Safewise.

that states with the lowest rate of alcohol-related traffic fatalities tend to have strict consequences for alcohol-related roadway violations compared to the most deadly states. For example, the average DUI conviction fine was only about \$300 for the five states with the highest drunk-driving

fatalities, compared to \$524 for the states with the lowest drunk-driving fatalities.

Out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia that were surveyed, Illinois ranked the tenth state with the fewest alcohol-related traffic fatalities.

New Law Requiring Children to Ride Rear-facing Until Age 2

by JESSI HOPKINS
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Effective January 1, 2019, children traveling in Illinois must ride in a rear-facing car seat until age two. This law change supports the long-held understanding of experts and advocates that a car seat should be used until the child reaches the top height or weight allowed by the car seat manufacturer.

According to Illinois law, a child must be in an appropriate car seat or booster seat until their 8th birthday; however, most children age 8 are still too small to sit in a vehicle seat without some form of car seat or booster seat.

Moving from a rear-facing car seat to a forward-facing car seat or a booster seat to a seat belt too soon is the most common mistake that certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians observe during car seat check events. Car seat and booster seat selection should not be based on a child's age. Caregivers should keep children in their car seats until they reach the height and weight limit set by the manufacturer. With every graduation to the next car seat or step, a child loses a level of protection.

Enforcement and education of this law can be challenging, as parents celebrate changing their child's car seat or travel direction as a milestone. And while "age 2" is a good start, efforts of educators and law enforcement officers should always be focused on maximizing a car seat's useful life and taking it "to the limit".

What will change about the law?

- The new law requires that children under the age of two be transported in a rear-facing child restraint unless the child weighs 40 pounds or more or is 40 or more inches tall.

Why did this law change?

- Numerous crash test studies show that when rear-facing, children are less likely to suffer serious injury than if forward-facing.
- The violent forces of a crash are spread across the back of the car seat's hard shell when rear-facing, as opposed to the child's head, neck and spine when forward-facing.
- A rear-facing car seat with a harness will cradle and slow down the body.
- Children that are forward-facing are more likely to sustain leg injuries than children that are rear-facing, because they often

collide with the vehicle seat in front of them.

How will they fit?

- Illinois is the 10th state to pass a law requiring extended rear-facing. Car seat manufacturers have continued to advance technology to allow for these extended weight/height limits.
- In the event of a crash, a car seat will pull away from the vehicle seat, and the child's legs will tuck into their body, much like a cannonball.
- A car seat "fits" as long as the child is within the car seat manufacturer's recommended height and weight range (identified on labels) and the top of their head is within one inch of the top of the car seat.



Source: Illinois Department of Transportation.

Metra Releases Crossing Malfunction Incident Details

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND BUSINESS

Metra released a report about an incident involving a malfunctioning railroad crossing gate that occurred on November 9, 2018. Metra's Rock Island District line in Mokena observed that railroad crossing gates were not closing properly as Metra commuter trains raced past a railroad crossing, nearly hitting multiple cars. Fortunately, no collisions or injuries were reported.

Footage from multiple Metra trains as well as from a Mokena police squad car recorded the incidents, and eventually measures were taken to fix the issue. Metra cited an electrical issue prevented the signals

from operating properly.

The latest report from Metra released on January 16 reveals that one of the train engineers failed to report the incident. Metra is cooperating with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) as they investigate the incident for any corrective or disciplinary actions necessary.

Metra also detailed a new policy for trains that are given permission to proceed past a train's "stop" signal. Once permission is received, the train is required to travel at no more than 20 mph to maximize stopping distances in case of a hazard or an emergency.

Source: [Chicago CBS](#), [Chicago Sun-Times](#), [Metra](#).



TRAFFIC SAFETY INITIATIVES

In the Spotlight!

Study Investigates Pedestrian Collisions in Rockford

A University of Illinois student has produced a preliminary report analyzing pedestrian violations in Rockford. Graduate student Michael Smith used time-lapse cameras to assess the behavior of jaywalkers and found that many of the pedestrians are resorting to crossing the street even though there are no crosswalks... because there were no working crosswalks nearby.

State Street was identified as the most dangerous road in Rockford. But perhaps the road is dangerous because of poor design and infrastructure. For example, the study observed that a pedestrian in a wheelchair had to leave the sidewalk to cross the street because there was no crossing ramp that allowed the wheelchair to cross directly from the sidewalk. Other issues such as missing sidewalks led to pedestrians sharing the road with vehicles on travel lanes.

Results of the study show that pedestrian collisions were more frequent on arterial roads than on other types of roads in Rockford. The study noted that principal arterials are designed for consistent, fast flow of traffic. However, this higher traffic flow increases the amount of time needed to recognize a pedestrian on the road as well as the stopping distance of the vehicle, increasing pedestrians' vulnerability to a traffic crash. This results in a transfer of risk from the vehicle to the pedestrian, where some of the risk of collision in a congested roadway is converted to the risk of striking a pedestrian through the increase in traffic capacity.

Source: Smith, Michael B., 2018. Walkable Rockford. 67 pp. [Available online at https://spaces.hightail.com/space/ibDjCBHWrm/files/fi-8492bb14-6a3a-41db-a911-0325097c751b/fv-a130936d-8c08-4e2a-99e8-6c9f69e8c6a2/UPP%20597%20Walkable%20Rockford_v7.pdf]

Year-To-Date Fatal Crash Snapshot

January 30, 2019

42 Fatal Crashes*

43 Fatalities*

On this day last year:

85 Fatal Crashes*

93 Fatalities*

48 Below

Fatalities change

* Provisional, subject to change
Source: IDOT



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Illinois State Police Trooper Killed in Crash

Illinois State Police mourns the loss of a state trooper who was struck and killed while responding to a crash along Interstate 294. Trooper Christopher Lambert was on the scene of a traffic crash near Northbrook on the evening of January 12 when another car failed to avoid the scene and struck him.

An off-duty nurse happened to be near the scene and administered CPR on Lambert. After being transported to the hospital, Lambert passed away around 7:30 PM. The death was initially deemed a weather-related accident, but the driver of the car that struck Lambert was later charged with reckless homicide.

Lambert had been assigned to District 15, the sector of the state police that is mainly in charge of

the tollway system in northern Illinois. In 2013, Trooper James Sauter was killed in a crash also along I-294.

Meanwhile, a Peoria County Sheriff officer and another state trooper were injured in a crash involving a commercial vehicle along Interstate 74 near Kickapoo on January 15.

**Trooper
Christopher Lambert**
End of Watch: 12 January 2019



Source: [ABC7 Chicago](#), [NBC News 25](#), [WBBM](#).