

CLANCY & DIAZ, LLP
PERSONAL INJURY ATTORNEYS

Fatal car accidents spike in California and across the U.S.

Traffic crashes are a common occurrence on our nation's roadways, but last year turned out to be one of the deadliest for U.S. motorists.

What's driving this troubling trend?

While some states like Wyoming, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Maryland, and Maine saw a decline in traffic fatalities in 2021, California was one of 44 other states that had an increase.

According to traffic safety officials, reckless driving behaviors such as speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, distracted driving, texting and driving, and aggressive driving are largely to blame.

Roads engineered to accommodate fast speeds instead of safety were also a main contributing factor, officials say. That, combined with driver negligence, has essentially canceled out 15 years of progress in reducing motor vehicle accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

In 2021, nearly 43,000 people died in fatal traffic accidents. That's about 120 deaths per day due to motor vehicle crashes.

Traffic fatalities increased in 2021 by 10.5%, and according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), that was the largest percentage increase since 1975 when the organization began collecting crash fatality data.

The situation was particularly grim in California, which recorded a 10.7% increase in traffic deaths in 2021 and accounted for roughly 10% of all traffic deaths in the country. Last year, an estimated 4,258 people died on California roadways—up from the 3,847 who died in 2020.

Safe Driving Tips from the California DMV

When you're behind the wheel of any vehicle, safety should be your number one concern. Along with following the rules of the road, wearing your seatbelt, and avoiding reckless driving behaviors such as speeding and drunk driving, there are some things you can do to keep safe and help prevent causing a serious accident.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles offers the following road safety tips to help you protect yourself, your passengers, and others on the road.

Signaling

When you must turn, change lanes, slow down, or stop, it is crucial to let other drivers know what direction you are going so they have enough time to react appropriately. You should signal:

- At around 100 feet before turning.
- When you change lanes. Also, be sure to check your mirrors and your blind spots before you change lanes.
- Before pulling into or away from a curb.
- When turning at an intersection. If you're turning just beyond an intersection, start signaling when you are in the intersection.
- At all times, even when you don't notice any other motorists on the road. A driver you don't see could suddenly appear and hit you because you failed to signal.

Likewise, you should also cancel your signal after turning if your vehicle doesn't automatically stop the signal when the turn is complete. You should also activate your vehicle's hazard lights if you need to pull over or there is an emergency.

Steering

Steering wheel size and steering wheel control vary from vehicle to vehicle. While there is no correct way to steer safely, there are steering recommendations by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Proper hand positioning on a steering wheel can help you be more in control of your vehicle. Think about your steering wheel as a clock. You should place one hand on the left and one hand on the right. The left hand should be placed at around 9 or 8 o'clock and your right hand should be positioned around 3 or 4 o'clock, depending on what feels comfortable for you.

If your vehicle is equipped with airbags and you are about to get into a collision, it's likely that your airbag will deploy. To reduce your odds of suffering an airbag injury, grip the outside of the steering wheel with your knuckles or on the outside and your thumbs along the rim.

Using Your Horn

Sometimes, using your vehicle's horn can do more bad than good. Vehicle horns are meant to warn other drivers of potential danger. But drivers may honk their horns as a form of road rage or to scold others.

Use your horn:

- To avoid collisions.
- To alert other drivers of a possible collision.
- To alert possible drivers you may be invisible on a narrow road.

Do not use your horn:

- If you want the driver ahead of you to drive faster or get out of your way.
- To signal to a driver that they made a mistake or driving error.
- When you are angry or frustrated with the driving habits of others.

Cell phone use

Using your cell phone while driving is illegal and dangerous. In the state of California, you cannot hold a cell phone or electronic communication device while driving. The only safe and legal way to use it is hands-free. You cannot write, send, or read messages or emails while driving.

Use your cell phone:

- To call the police or emergency responders for help.
- When you are parked safely off the road.
- If mounted and if action is only a single touch or swipe. Keep in mind your phone must be mounted on your windshield, dashboard, or center console. Your phone should not block or distract you from your view of the road.

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What Are Common Slip and Fall Injuries?

Slip and falls can result in severe and debilitating injuries. They can happen anywhere and at any time—inside a store, at a restaurant, or even in a parking lot. Some injuries can be so severe that they alter the way you live your day-to-day life.

After a slip and fall accident, you may be lucky enough to walk away with a few scrapes and bruises, but some people are not as lucky. Severe falls can cause long-term injuries and, in some cases, permanent disabilities. Some common injuries you may suffer from a slip and fall accident include:

- Broken bones - Fractures can occur in the legs, arms, wrists, and ankles.
- Head and brain injuries - Damage to the skull and brain can result in a loss of brain function and other brain complications. Concussions and other traumatic brain injuries are also common.
- Hip and knee injuries - A common injury from a slip and fall accident, 95% of hip fractures are caused by falls. Knee damage occurs when the ligaments of the knee joint are moved unnaturally.
- Twists, strains, and sprains - These painful injuries happen when tissues become overstretched or torn.

A slip and fall happens when a person trips or loses their balance. Slip and falls become extremely dangerous when height is involved. For example, a person may fall off a ladder, resulting in a severe injury.

More reasons for slips and falls include:

- Wet floors
- Debris on the floor
- Broken floors
- Loose rugs
- Poor lighting
- Potholes
- Stray cords/uncovered cables
- Uneven sidewalks
- Uneven steps

If you were injured in a slip and fall on someone else's property, you have the right to seek compensation for your losses. But the process isn't always as easy as it should be, and if you're not careful, you could end up having to pay out of pocket for your injuries.

Talk to a slip and fall attorney today

At Clancy & Diaz, LLP, we know what it takes to win slip and fall cases in California. We'll stand by your side throughout the entire process and do everything in our power to get you the compensation you deserve. Contact us today for a free consultation.

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Safe Driving Tips from the California DMV

Cell phone use

Do not use your cell phone:

- To engage in conversations or send texts while driving.
- To take pictures/videos, play games, look at social media, or use other smartphone apps.
- In hazardous driving conditions such as rain or fog.

Keep in mind that as a driver, you're only in control of your actions. It only takes one negligent driver to cause a serious accident that results in severe injury or death.

At Clancy & Diaz, LLP, we hold negligent drivers accountable. If you were injured in a Bay Area car accident, let our legal team fight for the compensation you rightfully deserve.

Give us a call today for a free consultation.

Call us to learn more about how we can help you with your potential legal case.