

# MOHSS

## Montana Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance

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### Staying Safe on the Road

Motor vehicles are central to the lives of many Montanans, connecting people to their workplaces, their communities, and their recreational spaces. In 2023, researchers estimated Montanans drove an average of 15,500 miles per year, 2,000 miles greater than the national average.<sup>1</sup> While driving is often necessary and frequently enjoyable, it is also one of the most dangerous activities most people perform on a given day, with motor vehicle accidents being the third most common source of accidental death in adults<sup>2</sup>, and the leading cause for occupationally-related fatalities.<sup>3</sup> This newsletter will examine the data on workplace injuries and fatalities occurring on Montana roads to identify the hazards responsible and will provide guidance for avoiding these risks when driving or working near the road.



### Data on Roadway Injuries and Fatalities in Montana

In determining the extent to which driving presents an occupational hazard to Montanans, researchers must combine multiple sets of data from the various agencies that oversee driving in the state. Because of limitations on the data each agency collects, it is difficult to know with certainty what percentage of the over-20,000 accidents occurring in Montana each year involve drivers engaged in occupationally-related driving.<sup>4</sup> However, data on injuries and fatalities occurring to drivers engaged in work at the time of an accident is available, albeit with limitations. These include:

The Montana Department of Labor & Industry, which oversees workers' compensation in the state, received over 5,500 injury reports for covered workers caused by automotive accidents between 2016 and 2025.<sup>5</sup> While most of these injuries occurred to workers in automobiles at the time of a crash, 11% (just over 600 injuries) occurred to workers hit by vehicles while working along roadways. Figure 1 provides data on the industries reporting these injuries most often.

Figure 1: Workplace Injuries from Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2016-2025



The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), jointly compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Montana Department of Labor & Industry, indicates over 160 workplace fatalities resulted from motor vehicle accidents between 2014 and 2023. Traffic fatalities were the most common cause of death for all Montana workers during this time and accounted for over 40% of fatalities.<sup>6</sup> The annual count and percentage is illustrated in Figure 2.

## Tips and Resources for Safe Driving on the Job

Reviewing the details of occupationally-related injuries and fatalities on roadways indicates many hazards contributing to the accident are not unique to occupational driving. These include vehicle speed, driver impairment and distraction, improper use of vehicle safety features, adverse weather conditions, and failure to perform proper vehicle maintenance. Some unique factors preceding work-related motor vehicle accidents included:

**Occupational Urgency:** Many working drivers are expected to either adhere to a schedule or to complete driving duties as fast as possible. Drivers are always encouraged to drive in accordance with the law (i.e., posted speed limits, signage, etc.) and in a manner appropriate for conditions (i.e. light, wind, precipitation, traffic, etc.), and to be willing to adjust travel expectations or even postpone travel if conditions are sufficiently unsafe.

**Unfamiliar Vehicles:** Workers often engage in work-related driving while operating non-personal vehicles, which can include commercial trucks or buses. While workers must be properly trained to operate certain commercial vehicles, their familiarity with operating the vehicle may not be the same as their personal vehicle. Drivers are encouraged to develop their understanding of any vehicle they drive, both before operation and while driving, to reduce the risk of accident.

The Montana Department of Labor & Industry encourages workers and employers to ensure safe practices when driving for work. The Montana Department of Transportation provides guidance on safe use of roads on their [Vision Zero webpage](#). Resources and training can also be found through the [National Safety Council's webpage on safe driving](#). Finally, workplaces looking to get hands-on driving experience are encouraged to reach out to the [Montana DRIVE Program through the Montana Office of Public Instruction](#), which provides in-person workshops in Lewistown, Montana. Through use of these resources, workers in Montana can make the most of the state's many wonderful roadways.

<sup>1</sup> From the [U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, "2023 Highway Statistics Report"](#)

<sup>2</sup> From the [Centers for Disease Control, "FastStats on Accidents or Unintentional Injuries"](#)

<sup>3</sup> From the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Fatal Occupational Injuries by Event or Exposure, 2023"](#)

<sup>4</sup> From the [Montana Highway Patrol, "2024 Annual Report"](#)

<sup>5</sup> From the Workers' Compensation Administrative Network, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

<sup>6</sup> From the [Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Montana Department of Labor & Industry](#)

Figure 2: Workplace Fatalities from Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2014 - 2023

