

## Motor Vehicle Deaths Increase by Largest Percentage in 50 Years by Brent Johnston

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National Safety Council came out with some national and state traffic fatalities today which are calculated a bit differently than those stats collected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). I have attached both for you to view. John, please attach to the Association website as you see fit. In Illinois, there were 1,017 fatalities in 2015 which according to NSC was a 12% increase over the same time period in 2014. As a state, we ranked 9<sup>th</sup> most fatalities out of 50 states.

Last year, the U.S. had the **highest one-year percentage increase** in traffic deaths in half a century, according to [2015 data](#) released Wednesday by the National Safety Council (NSC). Initial estimates, which may be revised when more information becomes available, indicate that 38,300 people were killed on U.S. roads in 2015, and roughly 4.4 million sustained injuries that resulted in medical consultations. The number of deaths rose 8 percent from 2014, compared with a less than 0.5 percent increase between 2013 and 2014 and a 3 percent drop the previous year. As a comparison, **every single month** last year we killed very close to the same number of Americans that were killed on 9/11 in the tragic collapse of the Twin Towers (3,192 traffic deaths **per month** / 2,996 deaths related to 9/11).

*"These numbers are serving notice: Americans take their safety on the roadways for granted," said Deborah A.P. Hersman, NSC president and CEO. "Driving a car is one of the riskiest activities any of us undertake in spite of decades of vehicle design improvements and traffic safety advancements. Engage your defensive driving skills and stay alert so we can reverse this trend in 2016."*

<http://www.nsc.org/Connect/NSCNewsReleases/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?List=1f2e4535-5dc3-45d6-b190-9b49c7229931&ID=103&var=hppress&Web=36d1832e-7bc3-4029-98a1-317c5cd5c625>

<http://www.nsc.org/NewsDocuments/2016/mv-fatality-report-1215.pdf>

<http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/us-traffic-deaths-biggest-percent-jump-in-50-years/ar-BBpDu10?li=BBnb7Kz>

And, how do we approach the highest percentage increase in fatalities in the last 50 years here in Illinois?

It's when Illinois citizens allow the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and several legislators...Rep. Sandack in particular...and a host of school administrators think that the best approach to reducing traffic deaths here in Illinois is to de-mandate **Public High School Driver Education** and completely remove their fiscal and societal responsibility to what is, without doubt, the #1 cause of death for the 15-20 year old age group not only in the nation, but here in Illinois as well. It should be no big surprise that there is a "remarkable increase" in the 2015 Illinois traffic deaths this year. Between 2008 and 2012 we saw a 38% drop in student enrollment of age-eligible students who took **PHSDE**. Commercial Driver Training Schools (CDTS) only picked up around 5% of that number which left approximately 68,000 age-eligible students unaccounted for and likely received no formal driving instruction anywhere.

The likely cause of this huge drop in PHSDE enrollment in that 4-year span was due largely to the unreasonably high student fees that school administrators imposed on teens and their parents. Simply stated...Illinois teens and their parents could no longer afford to take PHSDE, and if they cannot afford the high school Driver Education Program, they certainly wouldn't be able to afford a commercial driving school. It is the opinion of this writer that these fatal statistics have finally caught up to the ill-fated decisions that school administrators and legislators made 5 or 6 years ago. It took a while for traffic deaths in Illinois to react to the relentless efforts of school administrators and legislators to get rid of **PHSDE**, but facts are facts. When you consciously put untrained novice teen drivers on Illinois roads and highways, eventually that lack of training is going to catch up to you. And now, with a 12% increase in Illinois traffic fatalities, our school administrators and legislators want to remove the requirement for schools to provide the life-safety skills that are taught in **PHSDE** to Illinois novice teen drivers?

As I read several years ago... "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over, and over, and expecting a different result."

Do school administrators and legislators really think that removing the requirement for a school district to teach **PHSDE** is going to "improve" the driving skills of novice teen drivers here in Illinois or perhaps they just do not care?

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