CRSS OPERATIONS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration developed and implemented the National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) in the 1970s to make estimates of motor vehicle crashes in the United States. In 1988 NHTSA split the NASS into two surveys, the General Estimates System (GES) and the Crashworthiness Data System (CDS). Since then, the same data collection sites had been used for GES data collection. Given the shifts in population and the vehicle fleet, and the changing analytic needs of the safety community, Congress authorized NHTSA to modernize its crash data collection system. NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) redesigned the nationally representative sample of police-reported traffic crashes in the United States. The new system, called the Crash Report Sampling System (CRSS), replaced NASS GES in 2016.

CRSS was designed independent of other NHTSA surveys. The target population for the CRSS is the same as that for the NASS GES: all police-reported motor vehicle crashes on trafficways. The CRSS obtains its data from a nationally representative probability sample selected from the more than 6 million police-reported crashes that occur annually. To be eligible for the CRSS sample, a crash report must be completed by the police; it must involve at least one motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway; and the crash must result in property damage, injury, or death.

These crash reports are chosen from 60 selected sites across the United States that reflect the geography, population, miles driven, and crashes in the United States. CRSS data collectors review crash reports from hundreds of law enforcement agencies in the sites, systematically sampling tens of thousands of crash reports each year. The collectors obtain copies of the selected crash reports and send them to a central location for coding. No other data is collected beyond that in the selected crash reports.

Trained personnel interpret and code data directly from the crash reports into an electronic data file. Approximately 120 data elements are coded into a common format. After coding, quality checks are performed on the data to ensure validity and consistency. When these are completed, CRSS data files and coding documentation become publicly available.