FARS OPERATIONS

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) became operational in 1975 and contains data on a census of fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. To be included in FARS, a crash must involve a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public and must result in the death of an occupant of a vehicle or a nonoccupant within 30 days of the crash.

NHTSA has a cooperative agreement with an agency in each State's government to provide information on all qualifying fatal traffic crashes in the State. These agreements are managed by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA) State Data Reporting Systems Division, Office of Data Acquisition. Trained State employees, called FARS analysts, are responsible for gathering, translating, and transmitting their State's data to NCSA's standard format. The number of analysts varies by State, depending on the number of fatal crashes and the ease of obtaining data.

FARS data are obtained solely from the States' existing documents:

- Police Crash Reports (PCRs)
- State Vehicle Registration Files
- State Driver Licensing Files
- State Highway Department Data
- Vital Statistics
- Death Certificates
- Coroner/Medical Examiner Reports
- Emergency Medical Service Reports
- Other State Records

From these documents, FARS analysts code more than 140 FARS data elements. The specific data elements may be modified slightly each year to conform to changing user needs, vehicle characteristics, and highway safety emphasis areas. The data collected in FARS does not include any personal identifying information, such as names, addresses, or social security numbers. Thus, any data kept in FARS files and made available to the public fully conforms to the Privacy Act.

Each FARS analyst enters data into a centralized data system managed by NHTSA. Data are automatically checked when entered for acceptable range values and for consistency, enabling the analyst to make corrections immediately. Several programs continually monitor and improve the completeness and accuracy of the data. The 2024 FARS data file used for the statistics in this portal was created in November 2025; however, the 2024 FARS file will officially close in 2026. This additional time provides the opportunity for submission of important variable data requiring outside sources, which may lead to changes in the final counts. The updated final counts for 2023 are reflected in this portal. The updated final counts for 2024 will be reflected in the 2025 annual report portal.