

THE HUMAN COST OF A PUBLIC POLICY WHICH HINDERS AND PREVENTS MUNICIPAL POLICE FROM ENFORCING THE MAXIMUM SPEED LAWS IN PENNSYLVANIA

The latest *Traffic Safety Facts on Speeding* were published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in July 2017 using data collected in 2015. The NHTSA has several statistical measures of motor vehicle speeding-related fatalities within each state. One is “the *number* of speeding-related fatalities;” another is “the *percentage* of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities;” and a third is “the *number* of speeding fatalities on *local roadways*.”

In 2015, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had the *4th highest number* of speeding-related fatalities in the United States of America. (See Table 1) That same year, Pennsylvania also had the *second highest percentage* of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities in the nation (See Table 2) and the *second highest number* of speeding fatalities on local roadways (See Table 3). There were three states which were on the top ten lists of all three statistical measures. Pennsylvania was not only one of those states, it lead in two of the statistical measures *making Pennsylvania arguably the worst state in the United States of America for speeding-related fatalities*. (See Table 4)

In its *Traffic Safety Facts on Speeding*, the NHTSA also publishes the number of *speeding-related fatalities by roadway function class* for each state. From the busiest roads to the least busy roads, the classes are: (a) interstate rural; (b) interstate urban; (c) non-interstate freeway and expressway; (d) non-interstate other principal arterial; (e) non-interstate minor arterial; (f) non-interstate collector; and (g) non-interstate local.

An analysis of the speeding fatalities in Pennsylvania by roadway function in 2015, shows the rural and urban interstates and the non-interstate freeways and expressways, *where the maximum speed limits are primarily enforced by Pennsylvania State Police using radar*, account for only 13.6 percent of the speeding-related fatalities. Conversely, on all other classes of roadways, *where municipal police, to varying degrees, enforce the maximum speed limits using speed-timing equipment that is inferior to radar and unusable on many roadways because of their slopes and curvatures*, the speeding-related fatalities were, on average five times higher. (See Tables 5 and 6)

While there may be a number of ways to quantify the cost in human life of a public policy that hinders and prevents municipal police from enforcing the maximum speed laws determined by the General Assembly of Pennsylvania to be safe speeds, the following is considered to be as good as any. It compares the percentage of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities in Pennsylvania, which is 45.0 percent, and asks the question how many fewer speeding-related fatalities would there need to be to bring the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania under the national average of 27.23 percent. *The answer is 293 lives, which is 16 more than it was in 2013.*

If the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had 293 fewer speeding-related fatalities, it would have 907 total fatalities (1,200 - 293) and 247 speeding-related fatalities (540 - 293). This

would result in a percentage of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities of 27.23 (247/907) which is slightly less than the national average. *In 2015, the cost of a public policy which hinders and prevents is 293 human lives and unknown related physical injuries and property damage. Sadly, it was 16 more lives than in 2013.*

Table 1

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST <i>NUMBERS</i> OF SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES IN 2015		
Ranking	State	Speeding-Related Fatalities
1	Texas	1,105
2	California	955
3	North Carolina	547
4	Pennsylvania	540
5	Illinois	369
6	South Carolina	361
7	New York	343
8	Florida	320
9	Missouri	310
10	Arizona	307

Table 2

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST <i>PERCENTAGES</i> OF SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES TO TOTAL FATALITIES IN 2015		
Ranking	State	Percentage Of Speeding-Related Fatalities to Total Fatalities
1	New Hampshire	49.12
2	Pennsylvania	45.00
3	Rhode Island	44.44
4	New Mexico	43.62
5	Hawaii	42.55
6	Montana	40.63
7	North Carolina	39.67
8	Colorado	39.56
9	Maine	38.46
10	Illinois	36.97

Table 3

STATES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBERS OF SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES ON LOCAL ROADWAYS IN 2015		
		Speeding-Related Fatalities
Ranking	State	On Local Roadways
1	New York	149
2	Pennsylvania	146
3	North Carolina	119
4	California	72
5	Missouri	69
6	Georgia	68
7	Illinois	62
8	Indiana	61
9	Michigan	55
10	Oklahoma	55

Table 4

STATES WHICH WERE IN THE TOP TEN LISTS IN 2015 FOR MOST SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES, HIGHEST PERCENTAGES OF SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES TO TOTAL FATALITIES, AND MOST SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES ON LOCAL ROADWAYS				
Worst		Speeding-Related	% Of Speeding- Related Fatalities	Speeding-Related Fatalities On
Ranking	State	Fatalities	to Total Fatalities	Local Roadways
1	Pennsylvania	540 (4th)	45.00 (2nd)	146 (2nd)
2	North Carolina	547 (3rd)	39.67 (7th)	119 (3rd)
3	Illinois	369 (5th)	36.97 (10th)	62 (7th)

Table 5

SPEEDING-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA BY ROADWAY FUNCTION CLASS IN 2015 FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST		
Function	# of Fatalities	% of Fatalities
Local	146	28.4
Other Principal Arterial	109	21.2
Minor Arterial	100	19.5
Collector	89	17.3
Urban Interstate	37	7.2
Rural Interstate	23	4.5
Freeway/Expressway	10	1.9

Table 6

SPEEDING-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA		
BY ROADWAY FUNCTION CLASS IN 2015 FROM		
LOCAL ROADS TO RURAL INTERSTATES		
<u>Function</u>	<u># of Fatalities</u>	<u>% of Fatalities</u>
Local	146	28.4
Collector	89	17.3
Minor Arterial	100	19.5
Other Principal Arterial	109	21.2
Freeway/Expressway	10	1.9
Urban Interstate	37	7.2
Rural Interstate	23	4.5