

FARS OPERATIONS

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), which became operational in 1975, contains data on a census of fatal traffic crashes within 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 crashes in the State. These agreements are managed by Regional Contracting Officer's Technical Representatives located in the 10 NHTSA Regional Offices. Trained State employees, called "FARS Analysts," are responsible for gathering, translating, and transmitting their State's data to NHTSA in a 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 State's existing documents:

Police Accident Reports	Death Certificates
State Vehicle Registration Files	Coroner/Medical Examiner Reports
State Driver Licensing Files	Hospital Medical Reports
State Highway Department Data	Emergency Medical Service Reports
Vital Statistics	Other State Records

From these documents, the analysts code more than 100 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 within FARS do 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 conform to the Privacy Act.

Each analyst enters data into a local microcomputer data file, and daily updates are sent to NHTSA's central computer database. 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 2016 FARS data file used for the statistics in this report was created in August 2017; however, the 2016 FARS file will officially close in January 2018. 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 2015 are reflected in this report. The updated final counts for 2016 will be reflected in the 2017 annual report.