

Midwest Fatality Experience on All Roads

In the Midwest, as of the end of 2002, five states had raised their speed limits beyond 65 mph (Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota) and three states did not (Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin). Speed Limits were not only raised on Interstate roadways, but also expressways and many rural two-lane roadways.

Since four out of the five states who raised their speed limits beyond 65 mph had six years of fatality data following the speed limit increase, a study was conducted using the last six years preceding the speed limit change (1990 to 1995) and the first six years following the speed limit change (1996 to 2001). Data from Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin, which did not increase their speed limits above 65 mph, were also included in this study for comparison purposes. Minnesota changed its speed limits in 1997, so the years 1992 to 1996 are used as the latest five years before the speed limit change and 1997 to 2001 are used as the five years “after” the speed limit change. Table 13 displays average annual fatalities for the states surveyed.

Table 13 Six Year Fatality Averages for the Periods Before and After Raising Speed Limits: 1990-1995, 1996-2001

States that did NOT change Speed Limits Beyond 65 mph				States that DID Change Speed Limits Beyond 65 mph			
Average Annual Fatalities				Average Annual Fatalities			
State	1990-95	1996-01	Change	State	1990-95	1996-01	Change
Iowa	475	461	-15	Kansas	425	493	+68
Illinois	1492	1426	-66	Minnesota	578	614	+36
Wisconsin	732	751	+20	Missouri	1040	1143	+103
				Nebraska	262	288	+26
				South Dakota	152	164	+12
Totals	2699	2638	-61	Totals	2457	2702	+245
Ave. Change (per state)			-20.3	Ave. Change (per state)			+49.0

Table 13 includes Iowa and the six surrounding states and Kansas. As stated earlier, five of the states have raised some of their speed limits above 65 mph; three states have not. This table displays the average yearly fatalities for the years 1990-1995 (before) and 1996-2001 (after). The one exception is Minnesota, who raised their speed limits in 1997. The data years for Minnesota are 1992-1996 (before) and 1997-2001 (after). These fatality numbers were used to calculate the percentage rate of increase and decrease in traffic fatalities for the states in the study (see table 13).

Table 14 Change in Total Traffic Fatalities from 1990-95 to 1996-2001

States That Did NOT Change Speed Limits Above 65 mph		States That DID Change Speed Limits Above 65 mph	
Iowa	-3%	Kansas	+14%
Illinois	-5%	Minnesota	+ 6%
Wisconsin	+3%	Missouri	+ 9%
		Nebraska	+ 9%
		South Dakota	+ 7%
Overall Change	-2.3%	Overall Change	+10.0%

Table 14 shows that the six year average for fatalities in Iowa and Illinois (states that did not increase their speed limits beyond 65 mph) decreased. The four states that have six years of experience with speed limits higher than 65 mph show an increase in traffic deaths that ranges from nearly 7% to 14%. Minnesota, which only has five years worth of data after raising its speed limits, had an increase of 6%. Wisconsin, which did not raise its speed limits beyond 65 mph was the only state in that group to show an increase in traffic deaths.

An analysis of fatalities from 1990 to 1995 and 1996 to 2001 reveals the collective fatality experience for Midwest states that did not raise speed limits above 65 mph was a 2.3 percent decline in traffic deaths, while states that did raise speed limits above 65 mph experienced a 10.0 percent increase in traffic fatalities.

These Multi-year data are consistent with both multi-year data published in last year's report and the single year data produced for the previous years' reports. Preliminary data for the year 2002 shows a continuation of the trends found in this report.

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