

UM researchers map out America's deadliest roads

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Would you be surprised to learn that nine people died last year on the highway you take to work everyday? Or would you be shocked to see that six teenagers died within five miles of your home in fatal car accidents? With the help of the interactive maps on saferoadmaps.org developed by University of Minnesota researchers - you can learn those facts and more by simply typing in your address.

Researchers in the Center for Excellence in Rural Safety (CERS) have mapped out every fatality in the nation with details on each death, so now you can see the "dead man's curve" on your commute or the "devil's triangle" in your backyard.

"When drivers type in their most common routes, they're shocked how much blood is being shed on it," said Tom Horan, research director for CERS. "When it's the route you or your loved ones use, the need to buckle up, slow down and avoid distractions and drinking suddenly becomes much more personal and urgent."

The researchers will unveil www.saferoadmaps.org on Monday, July 28th at the Hilton Sonoma, 3555 Round Barn Blvd., Santa Rosa, Calif., as part of their annual conference on rural safety.

Enter your address at saferoadmaps.org and you will see a map or satellite image of all of the road fatalities that have occurred in the area. Plus, users have the ability to narrow down their search to see the age of the driver, whether speeding or drinking was a factor, and if the driver

was wearing a seatbelt.

One of the most important aspects of the new tool also illustrates which life-saving public policies, such as strong seat belt laws, are in the chosen area.

"This tool sheds light on the importance of strong public policy that helps save lives in states across the nation," said Lee Munnich, director of CERS in the university's Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs.

"When you can visually see how many lives can be saved, it really changes how the public and policy makers see our roads."

CERS officials hope the tool will educate the public about road fatalities, especially those that live in rural areas. U.S. Census figures show that 21 percent of Americans live in rural areas and the Federal Highway Administration has found that 57 percent of highway deaths happen on rural roads.

"We must take aggressive action to reduce needless deaths on our nation's roadways and saferoadmaps.org will give citizens and policymakers the information they need to improve travel safety," said U.S. Congressman James Oberstar, Chair of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. "I applaud the Center for Excellence in Rural Safety for their leadership in developing tools that can help us all in our quest to improve the safety of our nation's roadways."

Saferoadmaps.org will be useful to a wide range of drivers, from rural to urban driver's as well as drivers education teachers, parents and policy makers. It will also serve as an important illustration for teaching new drivers the importance of safety and give veteran drivers an opportunity to explore their most common routes and make sensible adjustments.

"By mapping out these fatalities, we can visually see what a large problem we have in our country," Munnich said. "It is time to start working towards prevention and each one of these dots on the map represents that."

To view a video about [saferoadmaps.org](http://www1.umn.edu/urelate/newsservice/Multimedia_Videos/safe_road.htm), visit:

http://www1.umn.edu/urelate/newsservice/Multimedia_Videos/safe_road.htm

Source: University of Minnesota

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