

# Payday can be a killer, new study shows

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(PhysOrg.com) -- People are more likely to die on or shortly after they're paid, according to a new study by University of Notre Dame economist William Evans.

Traffic fatalities, [heart](#) attacks and increased substance abuse are among the most common causes of the short-term – but significant – increase in [mortality](#) following payday.

The three-year study examined millions of death records in the U.S. in four demographic groups: seniors on Social Security, military personnel, families receiving tax rebate checks in 2001, and recipients of Alaska's Permanent Fund dividends.

According to the study, which will appear in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Public Economics*, mortality increased the week after checks arrived for each of these groups.

“The key for us was to know when exactly people were paid, which we could do for these populations,” Evans says.

So what makes payday so hazardous?

“There is increased economic activity after payday,” Evans says. “Some of the activity, like driving and trips to bars, will naturally increase risk. Many types of activities are also known to trigger heart attacks.”

“What surprised us was how broad-based the phenomenon was,” says

Evans. “We found increased mortality after payday for the young and old, low and higher income groups, for married and single individuals. The increase in short-run mortality also occurs for a large number of causes of death. The effect was particularly pronounced for car accidents, heart attacks and especially substance abuse,” according to Evans.

**More information:** [www.elsevier.com/wps/find/jour ...  
e/505578/description](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cfm?currenturl=505578)

Provided by University of Notre Dame

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