

★ ★ ★ ★ Safety Culture

Aggressive Driving a Factor in Up to 56% of Deadly Vehicle Crashes, Says New AAA Foundation Analysis

Motorists Concerned With Others' Aggressive Driving While Many Are Guilty Themselves

Washington, D.C. – As many as 56 percent of deadly vehicle crashes involve one or more unsafe driving behaviors typically associated with aggressive driving, according to a new analysis released today by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The analysis of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data shows speeding is the most common contributing factor and is involved in nearly one in three deadly crashes.

Aggressive driving is one of America's main traffic safety worries. Last year's AAA Foundation Traffic Safety Culture Index, a nationally-representative telephone survey, found nearly eight out of every 10 people surveyed rated aggressive drivers as a serious or extremely serious traffic safety problem.

However, in the same survey, many individuals reported driving in ways that could be deemed aggressive. For example, nearly half of drivers reported exceeding the speed limit by 15 mph on major highways in the past 30 days, and 15 percent even admitted exceeding the speed limit by 15 mph on neighborhood streets. This reflects the "Do as I Say, Not as I Do" attitude society has toward traffic safety.

"It's easy to think 'that other guy is the problem' – the one who runs someone off the road, tailgates, or yells obscenities," said AAA Foundation President and CEO Peter Kissinger. "In reality, examples of driving aggressively – any of which can lead to crashes, injuries and deaths – are all too common."

Such examples of aggressive driving include running stop signs or red lights, preventing other drivers from passing, speeding, illegal driving on the shoulder, and failing to yield. The goal in releasing these findings is to educate motorists about the scope of aggressive driving as well as encourage motorists to reevaluate their own driving behavior, and ultimately to improve this country's traffic safety culture.

"If you find yourself driving slowly in the passing lane, tailgating, or doing other things to teach the other driver a lesson, you are also part of the problem," said Kissinger. "An aggressive driving act by one driver can trigger a disproportionate and potentially violent reaction from another driver."



Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.

For more information or to see the full report, visit www.AAAFoundation.org.

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Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is an independent, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation's mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur.

To examine the prevalence of aggressive driving in fatal crashes, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) database was analyzed. The extent of aggressive driving in crashes was determined using the driver-related contributing factors coded in FARS. These are factors listed on police crash report forms as having contributed to the crash, and include a number of different factors related to the driver's behavior and performance, condition, and circumstances. Only factors related to behavior and performance typically associated with aggressive driving were included. Driver-related contributing factors in FARS were taken as indications that crashes may have involved aggressive driving, since it was impossible to ascertain driver intention from the FARS data. The frequency with which each of these factors was coded in fatal crashes was analyzed using FARS data from 2003 through 2007, during which there were 192,069 fatal crashes.