Fatal Crash Dashboard Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Question: What is the source of the data?
  - Answer: The Maryland Department of State Police Automated Crash Reporting System (ACRS) and the MDSP Data Warehouse. See Fatal Crash Data Definitions for more detail.

- Q: What is the difference between the number of fatal crashes and the number of fatalities?
  - A: Within this dashboard, fatal crash statistics summarize the number of occurrences in which one or more vehicles are involved in a collision that results in the loss of life. Fatality statistics summarize the total number of persons fatally injured as the result of vehicular collisions. There can be more than one person fatally injured in a motor vehicle collision.

- Q: How can I request data from fatal crashes occurring prior to 2015?
  - A: Data from 2014 and earlier were collected through a paper-based system called the Maryland Automated Accident Reporting System (MAARS). Requests for crash data from the MAARS system should be directed to the Central Records Division of the Maryland State Police.

- Q: How can I obtain the data in this dashboard?
  - A: Requests for crash data should be directed to the Central Records Division of the Maryland Department of State Police. Additionally, you may download crash data from the MDSP Crash Data Download application (2019-2023): https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Pages/Dashboards/CrashDataDownload.aspx And (2024-[current]): https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Pages/Dashboards/CrashDataDashboard.aspx
  - Crash data for the years 2015-2018 are also available in Excel formats available on the main Interactive Dashboards site below the 2019-2023 access. https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Pages/Dashboards/DashboardHome.aspx

- Q: How do I request a report for a specific crash?
  - A: An official copy of an MDSP investigation report may be obtained from the Central Records Division.

- Q: How can I access data for crashes in which people were injured?
  - A: You can find summary data related to motor vehicle injuries on the Zero Deaths Maryland Crash Data Resources web page. Refer to the Fatal Crash Data Definitions for an explanation of how the data may differ. Additionally, the source of the Crash Data Resource data summaries is derived from a database maintained by MDOT-SHA. State and local agencies are assessing and implementing transition plans to derive data from the Maryland State Police Data Warehouse. MDOT and MDSP are evaluating needs and resources for this transition, and additional dashboards with more information are under consideration. Additionally, you may download crash data from the MDSP Interactive Dashboards webpage: https://mdsp.maryland.gov/Pages/Dashboards/DashboardHome.aspx

- Q: Does this dashboard summarize the same data found on the Maryland Open Data Portal?
  - A: The Maryland Open Data Portal provides motor vehicle crash data derived from ACRS; however, the data are posted quarterly and are only as complete and accurate as of the day of posting and are not updated if the officer re-opens a report and updates the information. The Maryland Open Data Portal also does not include crash reports that are still open for investigation.

- Q: Does this dashboard summarize the same data found on the Montgomery County Open Data Portal?
  - A: The Montgomery County Open Data Portal dataset provides general information about each collision and details of all traffic collisions occurring on county and local roadways within Montgomery County, as collected via the Automated Crash Reporting System (ACRS) of the Maryland Department of State Police, and reported by the Montgomery County Police, Gaithersburg Police, Rockville Police, or the Maryland-National Capital Park Police. These collision reports are based on preliminary information supplied to the Police Department by the

reporting parties. The data came directly from the Montgomery County Police Department, not the MDSP Warehouse.

- Q: Why are there differences in data summaries found on the ZeroDeathsMD.gov website?
  - A: The ZeroDeathsMD.gov website summarizes data from MDOT-SHA's crash database (TANG), whereas the Fatal Dashboard derives its data from the Maryland Department of State Police Data Warehouse. As noted previously, a transition is being planned to move to using the MDSP Data Warehouse. We anticipate some data discrepancies as we bridge between two systems and processes. Additionally, a review of the ACRS data and current law enforcement practices in crash investigations resulted in some adjustments to queries/definitions of crash types. These are explained in the Fatal Crash Data Definitions document.

- Q: What is the difference between a 'pedestrian' and a 'non-motorist'?
  - A: See Fatal Crash Dashboard Definitions.

- Q: Why do some fatality numbers differ from what is published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA)?
  - A: The Maryland Traffic Records Coordinating Committee (TRCC), comprised of representatives that include MDOT and MDSP, formally established the MDSP FARS Analyst as the authority on fatality analysis inclusion for the State of Maryland. Previously, discrepancies existed between state and federal numbers due to the way traffic fatalities were defined (e.g., fatalities occurring in parking lots, fatalities due to medical complications, etc). Following the FARS standards, MDOT and MDSP now collaborate to ensure federal and state fatalities are in sync.

    However, the reporting period and cycle differs between the State of Maryland and NHTSA's FARS and NCSA, which causes discrepancies between these numbers. Additionally, some definitions between state and federal differ. Refer to the Fatal Crash Dashboard Definitions.

- Q: How do the data differ from MDOT SHA's Pedestrian and Bicyclist Fatality Infrastructure Review?
  - A: MDOT evaluates all fatal crashes on state highways to determine whether infrastructure or engineering deficiencies contributed to the crash. A subset of these evaluations, those for bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities, are posted on the Pedestrian and Bicyclist Fatality Infrastructure Review web mapping application. There may be a delay of six months between the date of the crash and publication of the evaluation. The data displayed on the Pedestrian and Bicyclist Fatality Infrastructure Review application will differ from that shown on this dashboard because it is a subset of fatality data and is published at a different reporting frequency.

- Q: What is the difference between these numbers and the Transportation Deaths in the Maryland Office of the Chief Medical Examiner's (OCME) Annual Report?
  - A: MDSP Fatal Crash Data follows national standards in determining the inclusion of fatally injured persons in statistical summaries, notably the ANSI D.16 *Manual on Classification of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes*, and the Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria (NHTSA). OCME transportation deaths do not follow the same standards and include fatal injuries on private roads, incidents that do not involve a motor vehicle (e.g., train strikes pedestrian), and boat-related incidents.

- Q: Not every fatality is included on the map. Why?
  - A: Data shown on the map depicts the location in which the crash occurred (i.e., one point per crash, not per fatality). Some locations did not have complete or accurate information provided by the investigating officer.

- Q: Are there any restrictions on the use of the data contained within this dashboard?
  - A: Under 23 U.S. Code § 148 and 23 U.S. Code § 409, safety data, reports, surveys, schedules, lists compiled or collected for the purpose of identifying, evaluating, or planning the safety enhancement of potential crash sites, hazardous roadway conditions, or railway-highway crossings are not subject to discovery or admitted into evidence in a

Federal or State court proceeding or considered for other purposes in any action for damages arising from any occurrence at a location mentioned or addressed in such reports, surveys, schedules, lists, or data.

- Q: 2024 trends for speed-related, aggressive driving, distracted driving, intersection-related, and roadway departure fatalities show steep declines from previous years, and impairment fatalities have increased. Has Maryland made significant progress in the declining areas and lost ground in impairment trends?
    - A: The aggregate data for Maryland crash trends in 2024 has been noted by the Maryland State Police and the Maryland Department of Transportation because of the significant changes from previous years' reporting. We conclude that this is primarily due to changes in officer reporting in the ACRS system upgrades launched January 1, 2024. Fields and attributes in ACRS '24 have been upgraded to align with federal MMUCC 5 standards, and additional improvements were made to enhance law enforcement data collection quality. The Data Definitions page explains the new queries developed to accommodate the ACRS coding changes. Interpretations of 2024 trends should be considered in light of these coding changes rather than a reflection of changes in driver behavior or crash type trends.

      For example, in ACRS '24, the attributes 'failed to give full time and attention,' 'cell phone in use,' and 'inattentive' were discontinued in favor of the (Driver) Distracted by Field, which has similar values. Research showed that police were reporting 'failed to give full time and attention' too often, leading to about 218 deaths being linked to "distracted driving" every year. In 2024, preliminary results (as of May 2, 2024) showed 14 fatalities attributed to distracted driving, relying on a query of the Distracted by Field. Analysis and interpretation of crash data are affected by the fluctuations and limitations of data collection related to law enforcement collection methods.

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