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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Transportation Cabinet, Kentucky State Police Announce Rise in 2021 Highway Fatality Count *Fatalities up 26 compared with 2020, Officials urge drivers to buckle up*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (April 18, 2022) – Highway fatalities in Kentucky increased last year according to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet’s (KYTC) Office of Highway Safety and Kentucky State Police (KSP). Data indicates there were 806 fatalities in 2021, compared to 780 in 2020 – a 3.3 percent increase.

“While many drivers are dedicated to making safe choices behind the wheel, seeing more people lose their lives on our roadways is concerning,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “Failing to click a seat belt or turn over the keys after drinking has impacted the lives of grieving Kentucky families whose loved one could have been spared from these preventable deaths. We all must be vigilant to practice safe behaviors to reverse this trend.”

Of the 806 highway fatalities last year in Kentucky, 54.7 percent were not wearing a seat belt and 15 percent involved alcohol. Approximately 26 percent involved speeding or aggressive drivers and 15 percent involved driver distraction. Pedestrians and bicyclists accounted for 85 deaths and motorcyclists accounted for 88 deaths.

“While numbers are important to identify potential issues and areas of concern, highway safety is not all about numbers – it’s about people,” said KYTC Secretary Jim Gray. “Reaching our goal of zero traffic deaths in Kentucky is a challenge, but we remain committed to making roadway safety improvements and working with our local, state and federal partners to move the needle.”

According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#), one of the most effective ways to help reduce highway traffic deaths is to combine public awareness campaigns with high-visibility enforcement efforts.

“The last thing we want to do is make a death notification, so if we can potentially save a life by writing a ticket, we’ll do it,” said KSP Capt. Paul Blanton. “At the end of the day, we want everyone to make it home safely.”

The KOHS partners with KSP, county and city law enforcement agencies throughout the state in awareness campaigns and enforcement blitzes, such as *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over*, *Buckle Up Phone Down and Click It or Ticket*.

“While we pledge to increase our awareness efforts, we need the public’s help,” said Secretary Gray. “We’re asking motorists to commit to save driving behaviors when behind the wheel, and everyone – both drivers and passengers – pledge to always buckle up.”

According to [NHTSA](#), wearing a seat belt gives motorists the best chance of preventing injury or death if involved in a crash. Properly fastened seat belts contact the strongest parts of the body, such as the chest, hips and shoulders. A seat belt spreads the force of a crash over a wide area of the body, putting less stress on any one part, and allows the body to slow down with the crash, extending the time when the crash forces are felt by the occupant.

“We encourage motorists to make safe choices on the road because it’s the right thing to do, not just because it is the law,” said Capt. Blanton. “Some may see it as an inconvenience, but traffic laws are in place for a reason – to save lives.”

So far in 2022, preliminary numbers indicate there have been 175 roadway deaths, down 16 compared to the same time last year.

KYTC continues to pursue infrastructure projects to prevent deaths and serious injuries on highways. The Cabinet’s 2021- 2022 and 2023-2024 budget includes additional funding investments for safety improvements. Anticipated dedicated funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and discretionary grant application opportunities will infuse more dollars to invest in communities statewide to implement innovative safety solutions in the coming years.

Historical Kentucky highway fatality statistics:

2000	823
2001	843
2002	915
2003	931
2004	964
2005	985
2006	913
2007	864
2008	826
2009	791
2010	760
2011	721
2012	746
2013	638
2014	672
2015	761
2016	834
2017	782
2018	724
2019	732
2020	780
2021	806

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Editor's note: See [attachment](#) for county-specific fatality statistics.