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Washington, August 22 (RHC)-- A new report says 9,560 people died in motor vehicle crashes between January and March in the United States. More than 9,500 people were killed in traffic crashes in the first quarter of 2022 in the United States, show estimates from the country's auto-safety regulator.

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 9,560 people died in motor vehicle crashes between January and March. The figure marks an increase of about 7% as compared to the 8,935 fatalities projected for the same quarter in 2021, reported NHTSA, adding that American roads had their deadliest first quarter in 20 years.

“The overall numbers are still moving in the wrong direction. Now is the time for all states to double down on traffic safety,” NHTSA Administrator Steven Cliff said in a statement.

NHTSA’s report does not break down traffic fatalities by root cause of the accident, but the usual factors of speeding, as well as impaired or distracted driving are in the mix.

However, Cliff said one-third of traffic deaths are typically caused by drivers impaired by alcohol or other substances.

“A number of issues are causing the rise in traffic deaths, including reckless driving and fewer police officers on the road” Jonathan Adkins, the Governors Highway Safety Association’s executive director said. “Seeing a police car gets drivers to slow down,” he added.

Adkins said he expects the year 2022 to be the third consecutive year for traffic deaths to increase as he’s heard from states that have said deaths continued to be high after the first quarter.

Meanwhile, pedestrian deaths also rose 13% from 2020, according to NHTSA. The regulator also said bicyclist deaths were up 5%, noting this happened because the roads aren’t designed to make it safe for bicyclists to share the road with cars.

The findings come just months after the NHTSA released its estimate of traffic fatalities for all of 2021, projecting the highest number of fatalities since 2005 and the largest annual percentage increase in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System’s history.

According to the NHTSA, an estimated 42,915 people died in motor vehicle crashes last year, representing a 10.5% increase from the 38,824 fatalities in 2020, whereas behind each of these numbers is a life tragically lost, and a family left behind.

“We face a crisis on America’s roadways that we must address together,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.

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