

DATA REPORT

OFF THE INTERSTATE, AFTER DARK

Where fatal-crash danger concentrated in Salt Lake County, 2020-2024

366 fatal crashes • 388 lives lost

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Independent analysis of public NHTSA FARS records

Executive summary

Salt Lake County's fatal-crash pattern is not primarily a freeway story. A five-year review of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration fatal-crash records found that 83.3% of fatal crashes occurred outside the Interstate functional class, and 57.0% of crashes with a known hour occurred between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.

The clearest local disparity involved pedestrians. Salt Lake County accounted for 26.1% of all Utah traffic deaths during 2020-2024, but 46.8% of the state's pedestrian deaths. Within the county, pedestrians made up 24.2% of people killed, compared with 13.5% statewide.

26.1%	46.8%	83.3%	57.0%
of Utah traffic deaths	of Utah pedestrian deaths	of fatal crashes off Interstates	of time-known crashes from 6 p.m.-6 a.m.

What stood out

- Pedestrian deaths were unusually concentrated: 94 county pedestrian deaths represented 46.8% of Utah's pedestrian deaths, even though the county represented 26.1% of all Utah traffic deaths.
- Surface-road classes dominated: 305 of 366 fatal crashes occurred outside the Interstate class, and 284 occurred on principal arterials, minor arterials or collectors.
- The 6-9 p.m. block had the most fatal crashes of any three-hour period, with 71. More than half of all time-known fatal crashes occurred between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Clear weather was recorded in 279 fatal crashes, while snow was recorded in three. This is a count of crash conditions, not evidence that clear weather causes more danger.

Interpretation guardrail: These are fatal-crash counts and shares, not per-capita, per-mile or per-trip risk rates. The report identifies concentration, not causation.

1. Pedestrian deaths were unusually concentrated

NHTSA records identified 94 pedestrian deaths in Salt Lake County from 2020 through 2024. That was 24.2% of the county's 388 traffic deaths. Across Utah, pedestrians were 201 of 1,484 traffic deaths, or 13.5%.

Put another way, the pedestrian share of traffic deaths was 1.79 times as large in Salt Lake County as it was statewide. Salt Lake County contained 46.8% of Utah's pedestrian deaths during the study period, compared with 26.1% of all Utah traffic deaths.

Pedestrians made up nearly one in four county traffic deaths

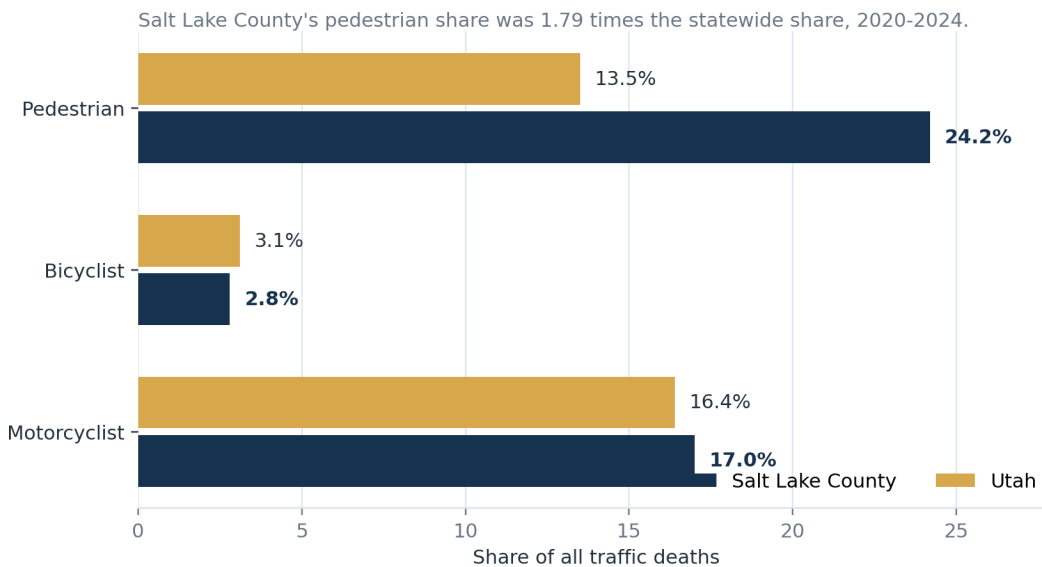


Figure 1. Share of all traffic deaths by road-user category. Source: Strong Law analysis of NHTSA FARS person records, 2020-2024.

How to read the disparity

The comparison uses the same federal fatality definitions for the county and the state. It shows composition, not a population-adjusted fatality rate. A complete explanation would also require measures such as pedestrian trips, walking distance, traffic exposure, speed environment, roadway design and land use.

Citation-ready finding: Salt Lake County accounted for 26.1% of Utah traffic deaths but 46.8% of the state's pedestrian deaths from 2020-2024.

2. The highway was not the whole story

Only 61 of the county's 366 fatal crashes were coded to the Interstate functional class. The other 305 occurred on other freeways, arterials, collectors or local streets. Principal arterials alone accounted for 166 fatal crashes, the largest single functional class.

Combining principal arterials, minor arterials and collectors produced 284 fatal crashes, or 77.6% of the county total. Those are the surface-road systems that carry many daily trips to workplaces, stores, schools, transit stops and neighborhoods.

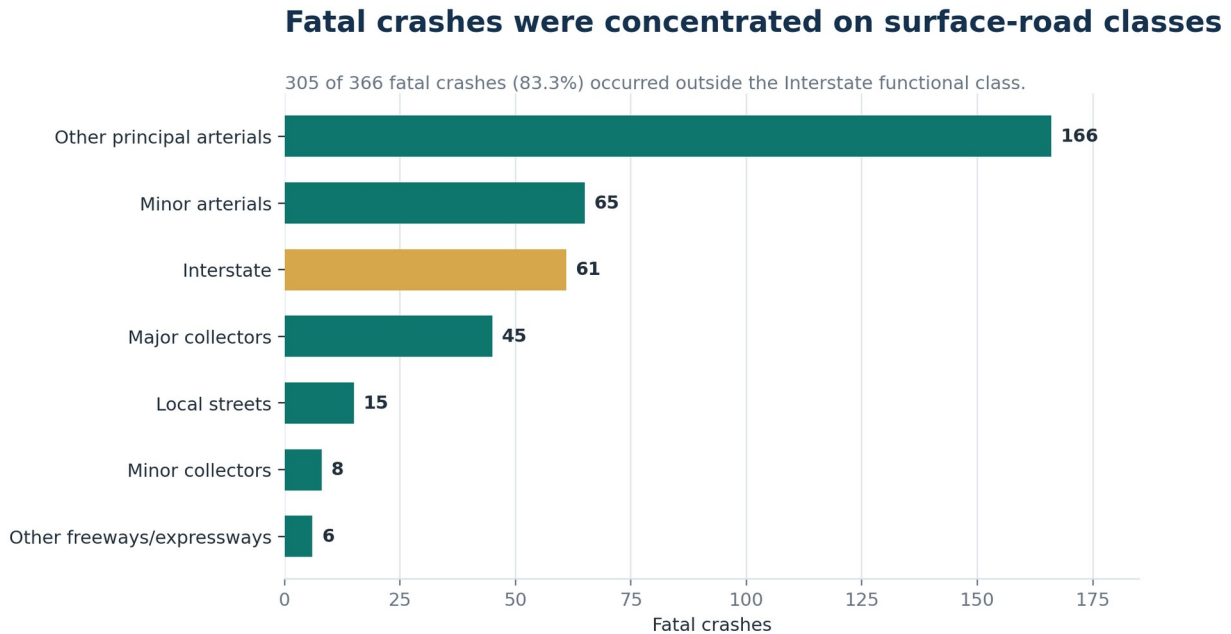


Figure 2. Fatal crashes by recorded FARS functional system. Other freeways and expressways are not included in the Interstate category.

Most common primary trafficway identifiers

FARS trafficway ID	Fatal crashes
US-89	27
SR-68	26
I-15	23
I-215	14
SR-201	14
I-80	13
SR-85	13

Source note: Trafficway identifiers are reproduced as coded in FARS. The table does not merge route numbers with local aliases or count a route when it appears only as the cross street.

3. Evening and overnight hours dominated

Of the 365 fatal crashes with a known hour, 208 occurred from 6 p.m. through 5:59 a.m. The 6-9 p.m. block had 71 fatal crashes, more than any other three-hour period. The next-highest block was 9 p.m. to midnight, with 55.

The 6-9 p.m. window had the highest fatal-crash count

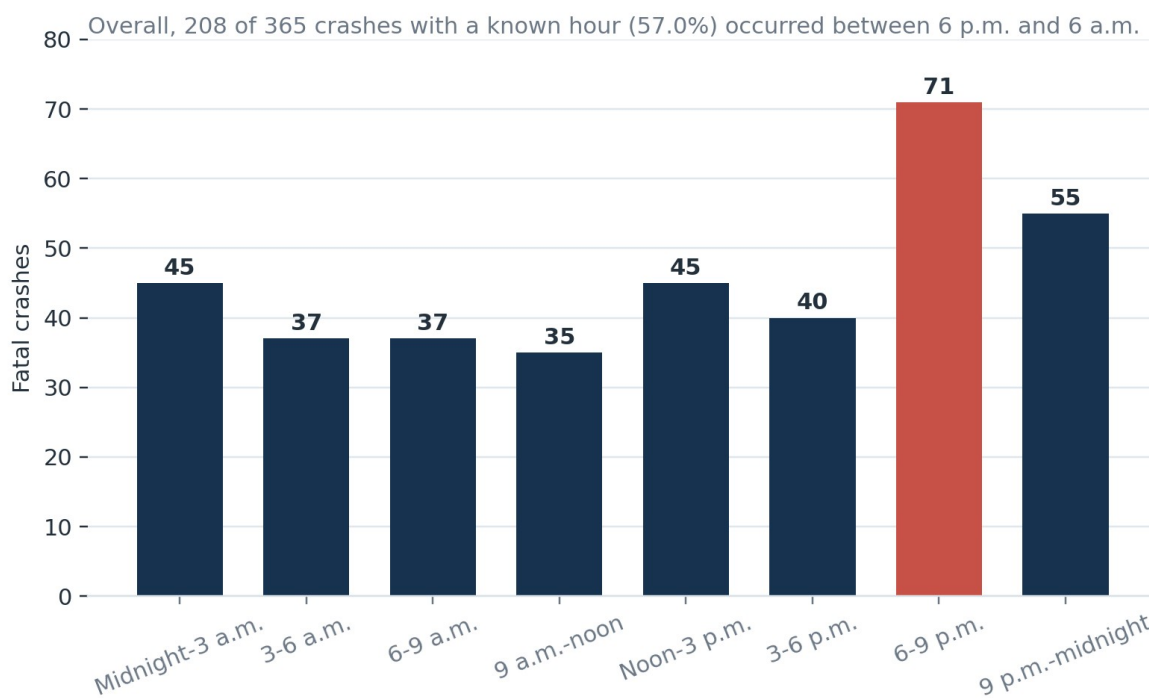


Figure 3. Fatal crashes by recorded three-hour block. One crash with an unknown hour is excluded from the block comparison.

Recorded condition	Fatal crashes	Share
Crash occurred in a dark light condition	196	53.6%
Crash occurred in clear weather	279	76.2%
Crash occurred in snow	3	0.8%

Weather and light conditions describe the crash scene. They do not account for how much driving occurred in each condition, so they should not be interpreted as causal risk estimates.

4. The five-year peak came in 2022

Fatal crashes rose from 68 in 2020 to 88 in 2022, then fell to 61 in 2023. The 2024 annual file recorded 69 fatal crashes and 73 deaths in Salt Lake County, a rebound from 2023 but still below the 2022 peak.

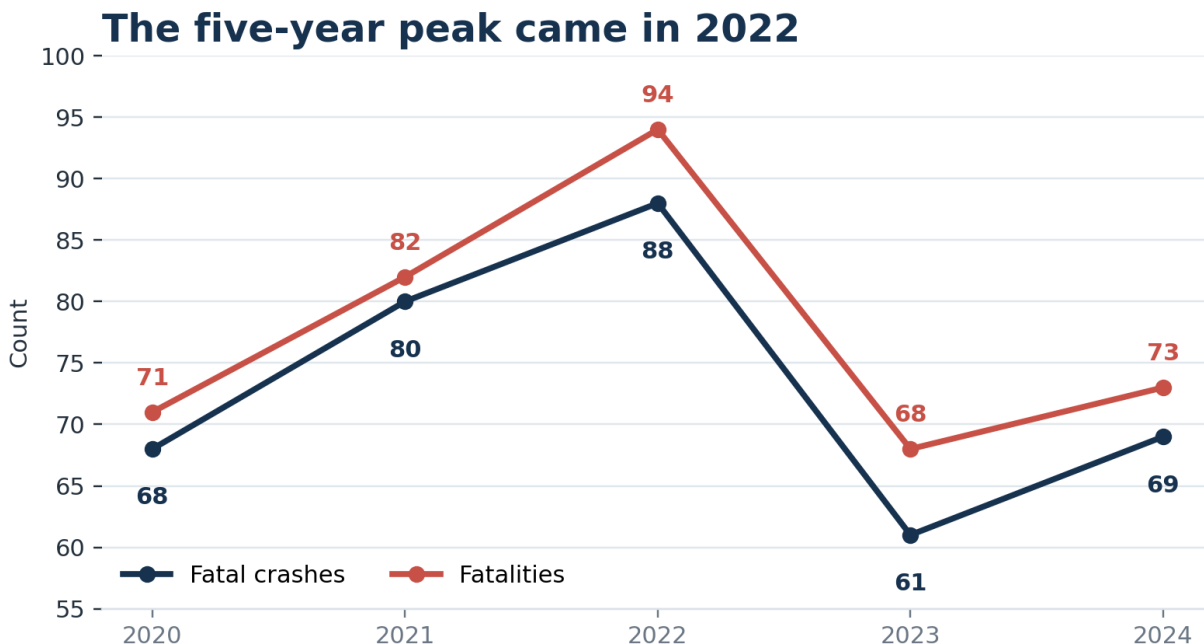


Figure 4. Annual fatal crashes and fatalities in Salt Lake County. Source: NHTSA FARS annual national CSV files.

Year	Fatal crashes	Fatalities
2020	68	71
2021	80	82
2022	88	94
2023	61	68
2024	69	73

The annual series is short and should not be used to claim a durable trend. It shows the shape of the five-year period, not a forecast.

5. Where the countywide burden accumulated

Salt Lake City had the highest raw fatal-crash count, followed by West Valley City. The table below shows burden, not rate. It does not adjust for population, road mileage, traffic volume, jobs, visitors or trips passing through a city.

FARS city coding	Fatal crashes	Fatalities	County crash share
Salt Lake City	122	128	33.3%
West Valley City	52	60	14.2%
West Jordan	26	27	7.1%
Murray	26	28	7.1%
South Salt Lake	19	20	5.2%
Sandy City	19	19	5.2%
Taylorsville	19	20	5.2%
Draper	19	19	5.2%

Source: NHTSA FARS city field. 'Cottonwood' and other labels are preserved in the workbook as coded by NHTSA.

Practical implications

- For employers and site managers: review the walking route between buildings, parking, transit stops and nearby crossings, especially for shifts ending between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. Lighting, visibility and safe access deserve the same attention as freeway commute time.
- For transportation agencies and local governments: use the surface-road concentration as a screening signal for deeper engineering analysis, paired with speed, traffic volume, exposure and severe-injury data.
- For community organizations and reporters: ask whether the locations with the largest raw burden also have the largest risk after accounting for people, trips and road use. This report supplies the numerator, not every denominator.
- For any public communication: distinguish fatal-crash burden from individual odds. A city or corridor count is not enough to label a place 'most dangerous.'

The strongest prevention question raised by the data is local: what changes on surface roads could reduce pedestrian exposure and fatal-crash severity after dark?

Methodology and limitations

Method item	Definition
Study universe	Every NHTSA FARS fatal motor vehicle traffic crash coded to Salt Lake County, Utah (FIPS 49-035), from 2020 through 2024.
Units	A fatal crash involves at least one death. Crash counts and fatality counts are reported separately.
Road users	Pedestrian and bicyclist categories use FARS person type. Motorcyclists use fatal person records with body-type codes 80-90.
Non-interstate	The recorded FARS functional system is not Interstate. Other freeways and expressways remain outside the Interstate group.
Time	Evening/overnight means 6 p.m. through 5:59 a.m. One unknown crash hour is excluded from that percentage.
Limits	Counts are not adjusted for population, trips, vehicle miles, walking exposure, traffic volume, road miles or other denominators.
2024 status	The 2024 annual file may be revised by NHTSA in a later release. This analysis is dated August 14, 2026.

Sources

NHTSA FARS overview: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/research-data/fatality-analysis-reporting-system-fars>

NHTSA FARS file downloads: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/file-downloads?p=nhtsa/downloads/FARS/>

Utah Highway Safety Office crash data: <https://highwaysafety.utah.gov/crash-data-and-statistics/>

Salt Lake City transportation data: <https://www.slc.gov/transportation/data/>

Public ArcGIS FARS map layer: <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=988b0ef627f34bca91a06951e1da405f>

Reproducibility and attribution

The companion workbook contains all 366 county crash records, all 388 county fatality records and all 1,484 Utah fatality records used in the comparison, plus formula-linked summary tables. Analysis by Strong Law Attorneys using public NHTSA records. No confidential client information is used.

About Strong Law Attorneys: a Utah personal injury law firm. This report is for public information and research purposes and is not legal advice.

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