

The Claim: New Year's Is the Most Dangerous Time of the Year to Be on the Road

by *The-New-York-Times*

THE FACTS

With all the open bars, people on the road and rejoicing in the streets, it is easy to imagine that New Year's is a risky time. Holidays are the most hazardous time for drivers, a result of sharp increases in traveling and drunken driving. And when it comes to New Year's, research over the years offers sobering statistics.

According to research by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which examined accident data in the United States from 1986 to 2002, the day of the year with the most fatalities from accidents is the Fourth of July, with an average of 161. Not far behind are July 3 (149) and Dec. 23 (145). New Year's Day is fourth, with 142.

A closer look reveals something peculiar: New Year's Day is the deadliest for pedestrians. In the study period, 410 of those killed on New Year's were pedestrians, slightly more than on Halloween (401). For New Year's, the problem was largely that of increased drinking and celebrations. Half the deaths involved alcohol impairment, and 58 percent of the pedestrians who were killed had a high blood-alcohol concentration, the study found.

Something to keep in mind as the Champagne flows Wednesday night.

THE BOTTOM LINE

New Year's Day is not the most hazardous day for drivers, but it's up there.

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