

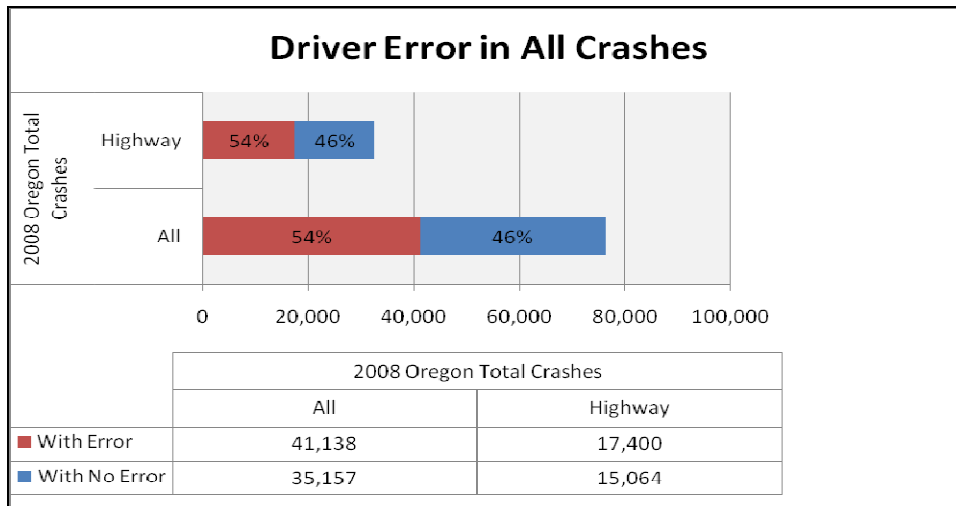
2008 Crash Statistics Reveal Trends, Hazards

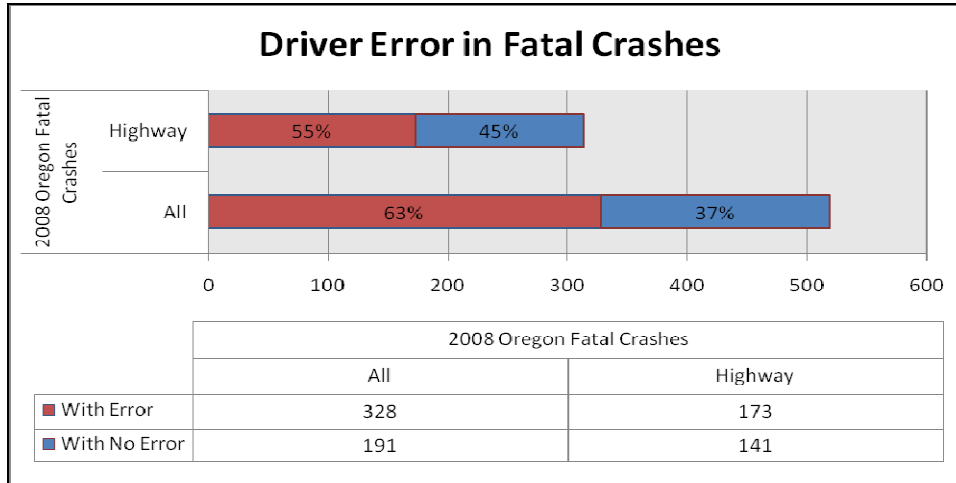
Date: September 27, 2009

A recently released [report](#) by the [Oregon Department of Transportation](#) sheds some light on the main factors leading to crashes in Oregon during 2008. The data apply to reportable collisions (those involving injury, fatality, property damage over \$1,500, or vehicles requiring towing). The report summarizes figures by type of error, location, driver age, contributing factors, and a variety of other categories. Among the findings:

- In 2008, 76,295 Oregon drivers were involved in collisions.
- The leading cause of accidents, overall, was following too closely.
- For accidents involving fatalities, the largest percentage involved basic rule violations (exceeding the speed limit, driving too fast for conditions, or speed racing).
- Car-bicycle crash data indicated failure to yield by almost three-quarters of motorists.
- Driver inattentiveness rose slightly, contributing to 3.9% of serious collisions.

Driver error was cited in 54% of all crashes, and in 63% of fatal crashes, as shown in the graphs below.





According to [The Oregonian](#), over 26% of drivers in collisions were following too closely or failed to avoid a stopped vehicle – which, according to ODOT, amount to essentially the same thing.

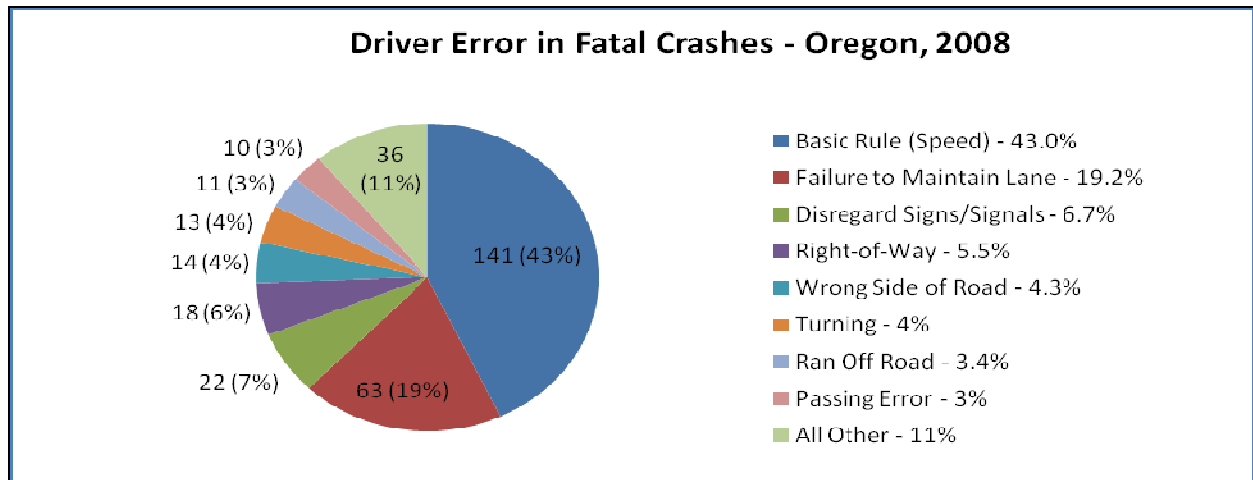
"There are a lot of instances of hitting a stopped vehicle where it's pretty clear that someone was following too close," [ODOT's crash analysis manager, Robin Ness](#), told [Joseph Rose](#) of *The Oregonian*. Although the two categories are basically equivalent, they are treated separately in the crash report, due to the language used in police reports.

Data on driver-bicycle collisions showed 72% of motorists failed to yield – a high figure, but still a 7% drop from 2007.

According to [The Oregonian](#), a survey of police reports showed a slight increase in the number of drivers whose inattentiveness led to a serious collision. In both 2006 and 2007, the figure was 3.6%. The 2008 total of 3.9% – which may be underreported – seems to support Oregon's intention to ban the use of handheld devices for calls and texting while driving.

[Theresa Heyn](#), a state crash data analyst, confirmed to [The Oregonian](#) that the number is likely higher. "I believe inattention is one of those underreported areas," she said. Heyn explained that people are often reluctant to admit they were distracted. Moreover, in the case of fatality or serious injury, Heyn added, investigators may receive "limited" information.

The 2008 report also showed that the most deadly errors were basic rule violations, cited in 43% of crashes with fatalities. The next leading cause was failure to maintain the correct lane, occurring in 19.2% of fatal collisions. These and other driver errors for fatal collisions are shown in the following chart:



Meanwhile, [national figures](#) were released by the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#). The data show traffic fatalities in 2008 were at their lowest level since 1961, a downward trend that continued [during the first three months of 2009](#).

Deaths nationally fell in nearly every category, with passenger car occupant fatalities reaching the lowest level since the department started keeping records. Fatalities related to alcohol use also declined by over 9% compared with 2007.

However, motorcycle deaths in the U.S. are on the rise, increasing for the 11th straight year. They now account for 14% of all highway fatalities.

“While the number of highway deaths in America has decreased, we still have a long way to go,” concluded [U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood](#).

These statistics are certainly worth careful attention by all drivers, of any sort of vehicle. It is sobering to learn that driver error contributed to over half of all Oregon collisions last year, and almost two-thirds of crashes involving a fatality. At the same time, there is a bright side: driver error is a factor within our control. Each one of us should take these figures to heart each time we get behind the wheel in the coming year. We know that certain things are likely to cause serious injury and death; we can work to be especially careful of these. For instance, we can see that following too closely is extremely likely to cause a crash, and we can keep a safe distance. We can also see that speeding is risky, and we can keep that in mind whenever we’re in a hurry. Arriving at your destination at few minutes sooner is never worth risking your life, your family, or the safety of others on the road.

We sincerely hope all your travels are safe. But if you should find yourself in an accident, please let us know so we can forward you a complimentary copy of our book, [7 Common Mistakes That Can Wreck Your Oregon Accident Case](#). This book was written especially for people who need helpful, practical advice on dealing with the legal side of things, without having to involve an attorney prematurely. As [Portland injury attorneys](#) who really care, we offer this book to anyone who needs it, free of charge. Just contact our office for your copy.

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Sources: [ODOT crash report: Drivers increasingly distracted, failing to yield for bikes \(Joseph Rose, The Oregonian\)](#), [2008 Oregon Traffic Crash Summary \(Oregon Department of Transportation\)](#), [U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood: Overall Traffic Fatalities Reach Record Low \(Press Release, U.S. Department of Transportation\)](#), [2008 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment – Highlights \(NHTSA\)](#), [Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities for the First Quarter \(January-March\) of 2009 \(NHTSA\)](#)