

UNDERSTANDING THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ROADSIDE FATALITIES

INTRODUCTION

Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) indicate that more than 2,100 people were killed outside of disabled vehicles at the roadside in 2019-2023. The victims of these crashes include roadside assistance providers, law enforcement officers, emergency medical services providers, and motorists who exited their own disabled vehicles as well as “Good Samaritans” attempting to help them. Moreover, the true total may be even higher, as previous AAA Foundation research found that fewer than half of all towing providers killed at the roadside were identifiable in NHTSA’s data as incident response personnel and nearly one-third of the crashes were not even coded as having been related to a disabled vehicle or traffic incident of any kind (Tefft et al., 2024). This research seeks to augment data from crash databases with information from other sources to identify crashes in which people were killed in roadside incidents involving vehicles that were stopped, disabled, or involved in a previous crash, and describe the characteristics of these crashes.

PROJECT GOAL AND PLAN

The project will involve a targeted literature search to identify relevant sources of data that can aid in identifying and characterizing roadside fatalities. Next, these data sources will be leveraged to identify crashes in which first responders, roadside assistance providers, and ordinary motorists were struck and killed at the roadside. Following procedures developed in past AAA Foundation research, data from these sources will be linked to provide a more robust understanding of the circumstances surrounding these crashes. The results of this research will provide a better understanding of roadside risks and inform potential countermeasures to mitigate them.

Project Team

[AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#)

Brian Tefft

(Principal Investigator)

Period of Performance

Q1 2026 – Q4 2026