

**Evolution of Traffic Safety**  
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**I. Chronology**

1771 - Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot

1865 - UK 'Locomotive Act'

1869 – Mary Ward

1895 – John Henry Knight

1905 – The American Automobile Association

1931 – The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals shoots down legislative efforts to deter speeding

Scoggin v. State, 38 S.W.2d 592 (Tex. Crim. App. 1931)

See, also Dougherty v. State, 773 S.W.2d 320 (Tex. Crim. App. 1989)

1930s – Dr. Claire L. Straith and Dr. C.J. Strickland

1934 – General Motors performs first crash test

1940 – The U.S. Government adopts first equipment regulation on automobiles

1942 - Hugh De Haven publishes the classic Mechanical analysis of survival in falls from heights of fifty to one hundred and fifty feet

1948 – The Tucker Sedan is released

1949 – The Saab 92 is released

1956 – The Ford Motor Company unsuccessfully markets the Lifeguard Safety Package

1958 – United Nations World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations

1959 - Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) is created

1964 - Volvo developed the first rear-facing child seat

1965 – The book *Unsafe at Any Speed: The Designed-In Dangers of the American Automobile* by Ralph Nader is published

1966 – U.S. Congress mandates seat belts in automobiles

1966 – The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) is created

1970 – The National Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA) is created

1974 - Mini Clubman Experimental Safety Vehicle featuring a "pedestrian-friendly" front end.

1975 – The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) becomes separate from

1978 – Volvo introduces its first booster seat

1979 - NHTSA began crash-testing popular cars

1984 - New York State passed the first US law requiring seat belt use in passenger cars

1986 - Central 3rd brake light mandated in North America.

April 1989 – Passive restraints required for drivers of automobiles

1997 – Passive restraints required in small trucks

1998 – Dual airbags required in automobiles

1995 - IIHS begins frontal offset crash tests

2003 - IIHS begins conducting side impact crash tests.

2004 - NHTSA released new tests designed to test the rollover risk of new cars and SUV.

## **II. Risk compensation**

Risk compensation is an effect whereby individual people may tend to adjust their behavior in response to perceived changes in risk. It is seen as self-evident that individuals will tend to behave in a more cautious manner if their perception of risk or danger increases. Another way of stating this is that individuals will behave less cautiously in situations where they feel "safer" or more protected.

### **III. Safety trends**

Despite technological advances, about 40,000 people die every year in the U.S. Although the fatality rates per vehicle registered and per vehicle distance travelled have steadily decreased since the advent of significant vehicle and driver regulation, the raw number of fatalities generally increases as a function of rising population and more vehicles on the road. However, sharp rises in the price of fuel and related driver behavioral changes are reducing 2007-8 highway fatalities in the U.S. to below the 1961 fatality count. Litigation has been central in the struggle to mandate safer cars.