

## WHAT IS NASS?

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The National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) was established in 1979 as part of a nationwide effort to reduce motor vehicle crashes, injuries, and deaths on our highways. NASS is operated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) which is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

NASS collects crash data to help government scientists and engineers analyze motor vehicle crashes and injuries. NASS has detailed data on a representative random sample of minor, serious, and fatal crashes involving passenger cars, pickup trucks, vans, large trucks, motorcycles, and pedestrian crashes.

## HOW NASS WORKS

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NASS has two parts: the *Crashworthiness Data System (CDS)* and the *General Estimates System (GES)*. Both systems select cases from police accident reports at police agencies within randomly selected areas of the country. These areas are counties and major cities that represent all areas of the United States.

NASS in turn is part of a larger NHTSA electronic data system, which includes Special Crash Investigations (SCI), the Large Truck Crash Causation Study (LTCCS), the National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey (NMVCCS) and the Crash Injury Research & Engineering Network (CIREN).

Crashworthiness field researchers carefully study and record key aspects of each motor



vehicle crash selected: the crash location, the vehicles, and occupants injuries. General estimates come from a larger sample of crashes, but only basic information from police accident reports is coded into a computer file.

## CRASHWORTHINESS DATA SYSTEM (CDS)

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There are 24 field research teams that study about 5,000 crashes a year involving passenger cars, pickup trucks, and vans. Since 1979, CDS has collected data on over 160,000 crashes. Trained crash researchers obtain data and photographs from crash sites collecting scene evidence such as skid marks, fluid spills, broken glass, and bent guardrails. They locate the vehicles involved, photograph them, measure the crash damage and identify interior locations that were struck by the occupants.

These researchers follow up their on-site investigations by interviewing crash victims and reviewing medical records to determine the nature and severity of injuries. Interviews with people in the crash are conducted with discretion and confidentiality.

The research teams are interested only in information that will help them understand the nature and consequences of the crashes. ***Personal information about individuals -- names, addresses, license and registration numbers, and even specific crash locations -- are not included in public NASS files.***

## GENERAL ESTIMATES SYSTEM (GES)

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General estimates come from a nationally representative sample of police reports on crashes of all types from minor to serious. Since 1997, GES has collected data on approximately 60,000 crashes each year. These reports are chosen from 60 areas that reflect the geography, roadway mileage, population, and traffic density of the U.S. This information is used to estimate how many motor vehicle crashes of different kinds take place and what happens when they occur.

## COOPERATION IS ESSENTIAL

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NASS researchers depend on the participation and cooperation of law enforcement agencies, hospitals, physicians, medical examiners, coroners, tow yard operators, repair garages and the individuals involved in crashes.



Cooperation from *law enforcement agencies* enables NASS researchers to list and select crashes to be studied and to obtain police accident reports (which give key information on the

location of the crash, the vehicles involved, and where the injured were taken for medical care). The police also may permit access to certain roadways and crashed vehicles.

The *medical community* provides access to its records. It is the primary source of data on the nature and severity of injuries and the time spent recovering in the hospital.

*Tow yards, repair garages, and impound vehicle lots*, provide access to damaged vehicles. NASS researchers photograph vehicles at these sites, measure vehicle damage, and record the sources of occupant injury.

Confidential interviews with *people who were in crashes* provide confirmation of other information, insights into how crashes occur, the extent of injuries not treated at hospitals, whether safety belts were used, and work time lost.

Taken together, information from these sources provide researchers with a detailed profile of a crash -- from before the crash through medical care for the injured.

## HOW THE INFORMATION IS USED

The data collected by the CDS and GES research teams become permanent NASS records. This information is used by NHTSA for a variety of purposes:

- to assess the overall state of highway safety and identify existing and potential highway safety problems;
- to obtain detailed data on the crash performance of passenger cars, pickup trucks, and vans; and evaluate vehicle safety systems and designs;
- to learn more about the nature of crash injuries and about the relationship between the type and severity of a crash and the resultant injuries;
- to assess the effectiveness of motor vehicle and highway safety program standards, and evaluate alcohol and safety belt use programs; and,
- to evaluate the effect of such societal changes as increased traffic flow and increased large truck traffic.

Information collected in NASS, with all personal identifiers removed, is made available to other researchers and organizations involved in the highway safety effort. They include other Federal agencies; state and local governments; universities; research institutions; the automobile, trucking, and insurance industries; and the general public.



## INFORMATION ON NASS

*For statistical publications and information, case data, or data files, contact:*

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
National Center for Statistics and Analysis  
Data Reporting and Information Division  
NVS-424  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20590

**(800) 934-8517**

or

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/ncsa>

**(202) 366-7078 (FAX)**

*For more information on NASS technical operations and field procedures, contact:*

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
National Center for Statistics and Analysis  
Crash Investigation Division, NVS-411  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20590

**(202) 366-5378 (202) 366-3189 (FAX)**

## AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE

*Do you need information on auto safety recalls, crash test results, or fuel economy ratings? Do you have a complaint about a possible motor vehicle safety defect? Call the Auto Safety Hotline, toll-free:*

**(800) 424-9393**

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## National Automotive Sampling System



## RESEARCH ON MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES AND INJURIES TO SUPPORT SAFETY PROGRAMS

National Center for Statistics and Analysis  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation

