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US ROAD DEATHS RISE AT RECORD PACE AS RISKY DRIVING PERSISTS

The number of U.S. traffic deaths surged in the first nine months of 2021 to 31,720, the government reported Tuesday, keeping up a record pace of increased dangerous driving during the coronavirus pandemic.

The estimated figure of people dying in motor vehicle crashes from January to September 2021 was 12% higher than the same period in 2020. That represents the highest percentage increase over a nine-month period since the Transportation Department began recording fatal crash data in 1975.



The tally of 31,720 deaths was the highest nine-month figure since 2006.

Federal data from the department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration showed that traffic fatalities increased during the nine-month period in 38 states, led by those in the West and South such as Idaho, Nevada and Texas, and was flat in two states. The numbers declined in 10 states and the District of Columbia.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has pledged help and released a new national strategy last week aimed at reversing the trend, which he calls a crisis. He told The Associated Press last week that his department over the next two years will provide federal guidance as well as billions in grants under President Joe Biden's new infrastructure law to spur states and localities to lower speed limits and embrace safer road design such as dedicated bike and bus lanes, better lighting and crosswalks. The strategy also urges the use of speed cameras, which the department says could provide more equitable enforcement than police traffic stops.

Traffic deaths began to spike in 2019. NHTSA has blamed reckless driving behavior for increases during the pandemic, citing behavioral research showing that speeding and traveling without a seat belt have been higher. Before 2019, the number of fatalities had fallen for three straight years.

Traffic deaths for the first nine months of the year are now up almost 33% over the past decade as auto safety advocates urge action by NHTSA to implement safety rules ordered by Congress, such as rear seat belt reminders, that are years overdue. Nearly 7,800 more people died from January through September in 2021 compared with figures from 2011, according to government estimates.

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

Butternut Squash Soup



Ingredients

- 1 large butternut squash
- 2 apples peeled and sliced
- 1 celery stalk sliced
- 1 carrot sliced
- 1 onion diced
- 1/2 inch fresh ginger, peeled and diced
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 cups unsalted vegetable broth
- 4 cups unsalted chicken broth
- 2 tbs maple syrup
- Pinch of salt
- Pepper to taste

Instructions

- Split squash in half lengthwise, remove seeds, and roast in at 375 for 45 min.
- Saute onion, celery, carrot, ginger, and cinnamon sticks in a pot with a little olive oil - about 10 min
- When squash is done, let it cool off. Peel and add to the pot.
- Add 4 cups of broth
- Let it simmer 20-30 min
- Use an emergent blender and blend together in the pot. Alternatively, you can use a blender in small batches
- Check consistency and taste. You may want the other 2c of liquid and adjust seasonings. A twist or 2 of Himalayan salt, some pepper, maybe even a tablespoon or 2 of maple syrup, a dash of cinnamon powder.