

## Fatal accidents increase on small Texas highways

DALLAS (AP) — The rural roads of Texas are becoming deadlier, and law enforcement officials say they do not know why.

In Waller County, 15 people were killed last year, compared with three in 1995 — a 400 percent increase in the 25,000-person county just northwest of Houston. The jump was one of the highest in the state for counties with more than 10 fatalities.

"Last year was just outrageous," Waller County Sheriff Randy Smith told The Dallas Morning News in Sunday's editions. "I really don't know why, but we had a lot of three- and four-people accidents. We've never had a year that high."

**“None of these seem to make sense. A lot of the fatalities were on rural roads where we don't have a lot of traffic.”**

**Brent Button  
 Hill County Sheriff**

Although fatalities increased on all Texas roads last year, rural county roads and two-lane state and U.S. highways posted the biggest jumps. Some speculate that the death rate was influenced by a 1996 increase in speed limits on many roads to 70 mph.

According to county-by-county traffic statistics recently compiled by the Texas Department of Public Safety, fatalities more than doubled last year in 15 Texas counties with more than 10 traffic deaths in 1996. Those counties are Bowie, Brown, Cooke, Eastland, Galveston, Hill, Hood, Jim Wells, Kaufman, Madison, Palo Pinto, Polk, Taylor, Waller and Washington.

"None of these seem to make sense," said Sheriff Brent Button of Hill County, where fatalities rose from nine in 1995 to 31 in 1996. "A lot of the fatalities were on rural roads where we don't have a lot of traffic."

Harris County remains Texas' leader in fatalities with 366 in 1996. That represents a 21 percent increase over 1995, when the home county of Houston led the state with 302 fatalities.

Dallas County followed last year with 270 fatalities, a 9 percent rise over its 247 fatalities in 1995. Tarrant County saw a decrease, from 135 in 1995 to 126 last year.

Statewide, 3,738 people were killed on Texas roads in 1996, an increase of almost 18 percent.

Despite the increases, state and county officials are reluctant to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between speed and deaths just yet. They say there were a number of factors besides speed: Alcohol, traffic congestion, economics and increasingly hostile drivers.

"It's difficult to put a finger on it at this time," said Jim Templeton, manager of the accident records bureau for the Department of Public Safety. "The type of study needed to determine a cause-and-effect relationship requires certain data that we don't yet have."



PHOTOGRAPH: Brandon

### Checkmate

Dr. Dusan Djuric, a Professor of meteorology and a member of the TAMU Chess Club practices Sunday afternoon. TAMU Chess Club meets Sunday 1 - 5 p.m. at Rudder Tower.

## CAMPUS CALENDAR

Monday	Wednesday	Thursday
<p><b>Aggie Roadrunners:</b> There will be a daily run of 2-3 miles beginning at 7 p.m. in front of G. Rollie White. Runners of all levels are encouraged to attend. For more information call Hank Bullinger at 821-6339.</p> <p><b>Texas A&amp;M Women's Rugby:</b> There will be practice from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the TAMU Rugby Field. No experience is necessary. For more information contact Wendy at 696-9012.</p>	<p><b>Aggie Roadrunners:</b> There will be a daily run of 2-3 miles beginning at 7 p.m. in front of G. Rollie White. Runners of all levels are encouraged to attend. For more information call Hank Bullinger at 821-6339.</p> <p><b>Texas A&amp;M Women's Rugby:</b> There will be practice from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the TAMU Rugby Field. No experience is necessary. For more information contact Wendy at 696-9012.</p> <p><b>Texas Aggie Brew Club:</b> There will be a meeting about beer and brewing at Carney's Pub at 7 p.m. For more information contact Abel at 845-5236 or abelmann@iname.com.</p>	<p><b>Aggie Roadrunners:</b> There will be a daily run of 2-3 miles beginning at 7 p.m. in front of G. Rollie White. Runners of all levels are encouraged to attend. For more information call Hank Bullinger at 821-6339.</p> <p><b>Texas A&amp;M Women's Rugby:</b> There will be practice from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the TAMU Rugby Field. No experience is necessary. For more information contact Wendy at 696-9012.</p> <p><b>Campus Calendar is a Battalion vice that lists non-profit student faculty events and activities. It should be submitted no later than three days in advance of the run date. Application deadlines and notices are not events and will be run in Campus Calendar. If you have any questions, please call the newsroom at 845-3313.</b></p>

## Costs of workplace injuries rise

Expenses now rival those of heart disease and cancer

CHICAGO (AP) — Job-related injuries and illnesses are more common than most people believe, costing the nation far more than AIDS or Alzheimer's disease and at least as much as cancer or heart disease, a new report says.

"Occupational injuries and illnesses are an insufficiently appreciated contributor to the total burden of health care costs in the United States," researchers say in Monday's issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine.

The researchers combined many sources of government and other data for what they believe are the first national estimates of job-related injuries and illnesses in a single year.

In 1992, about 6,500 Americans died and 13.2 million were hurt from work-related causes, said the researchers, led by J. Paul Leigh of the economics department at San Jose State University in California.

That toll averages to 18 deaths and 36,000 injuries a day, compared with government estimates of 17 workers fatally hurt each day and 9,000 nonfatally injured.

Occupational illnesses — such as lung diseases and lead poisoning — caused 60,300 deaths and 862,200 illnesses in 1992, the researchers said. That averages to 165 deaths and more than 2,300 new ailments daily, compared to government figures of 137 and 1,095 daily in those

categories, respectively. And the new report probably underestimates the totals because injuries and illnesses are undercounted, the researchers said.

**“The magnitude of the occupational health burden really rivals other major problems.”**

**Dr. Linda Rosenstock  
 Director of National  
 Institute for Occupational  
 Safety and Health**

In all, the direct costs of injuries and illnesses totaled \$65 billion in 1992 (\$178 million a day), the researchers said. Indirect costs — including lost wages — were \$106 billion (\$290 million a day), they said. That made the total \$171 billion that year (\$468 million a day).

That is far more than the 1992 cost of AIDS, which was \$30 billion, excluding the costs of administering worker's compensation, Social Security or health insurance benefits. Occupational injuries and ill-

nesses were \$155 billion, excluding those administrative costs, the researchers said.

Similarly, the direct and indirect economic burden of Alzheimer's disease in 1992 was much less than work-related deaths and injuries. Alzheimer's totaled \$67.3 billion, including administrative costs, the researchers said.

And for heart and all other blood-vessel diseases, the total was \$164.3 billion. For cancer, it was \$170.7 billion. For musculoskeletal diseases, such as arthritis and osteoporosis, it was \$149 billion, researchers said.

"The authors make a very good case that the magnitude of the occupational health burden really rivals other major problems," said Dr. Linda Rosenstock, director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Her agency, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, helped pay for the research but did not have a hand in its design or conclusions, and she was not involved in the work.

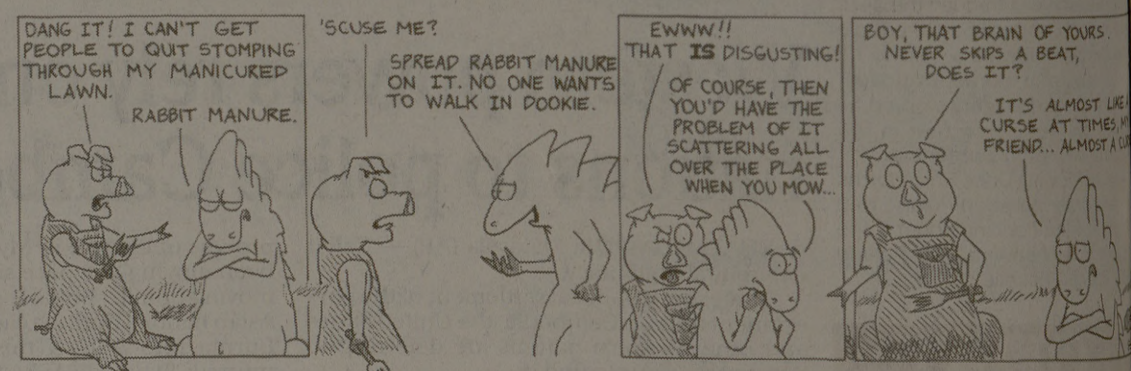
She said the report should encourage the nation to put a greater emphasis on workplace safety.

"We have tools for prevention here, in the workplace, that sometimes just don't exist for other illnesses," she said by telephone from Washington. "These are all inherently preventable illnesses and injuries."

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly Cloudy High: 95° Low: 75°	Thunderstorms High: 94° Low: 75°	Partly Cloudy High: 95° Low: 74°

## Sketch



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