



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590

August 25, 2022

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

Thank you for your letter dated August 5, 2022, expressing concern about frontover crashes. I share in your concern about frontover crashes resulting in injuries and fatalities, especially among children. NHTSA is committed to investigating these circumstances and is dedicated to promoting vehicles, technologies, and behaviors that keep our children safe.

I am pleased to provide you with information in response to the cited news segment and your questions about the Non-Traffic Surveillance (NTS) System. Most critically, the 2016–2020 NTS non-traffic crash injury and fatality data are currently being processed and will be released in September.

The July 28, 2022 NBC4 news segment “Driveway Danger: Kids Being Injured and Killed in ‘Frontover’ Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) Blind Zone Incidents” highlighted the dangers of blind zones in front of vehicles, especially in larger SUVs. Although the data cited in the report included information about accidents that might not properly be considered frontovers, the danger of blind zones remains valid and must be addressed. I am pleased to report that, given the risk presented by blind zones and our overall focus on vulnerable road user safety, NHTSA will initiate a review of the size and scope of frontover crashes, beginning with collecting more data. To that end, NHTSA is also considering the addition of two new non-traffic crash data elements related to backovers and frontovers for every NTS non-traffic crash in the upcoming data collection year.

Presently, actual frontover crash counts are difficult to confirm due to the challenges law enforcement faces in distinguishing these crashes from other forward moving vehicle impacts with non-motorists and to the locations where these crashes often occur. For example, a forward moving vehicle crash involving a driver turning into a driveway and striking a child playing in the driveway would typically not be considered a frontover; but if that driver struck the child while pulling out of a garage (having backed into the garage), it would be considered a frontover. These nuances pose difficulties for law enforcement to accurately capture frontover incidents which, in turn, complicates our data collection. Additionally, frontover crashes frequently occur in driveways and parking lots that are not located on the public trafficway; thus, law enforcement may not report these occurrences using a crash report. Finally, among the State crash reports NHTSA receives, there are no data fields dedicated to identifying frontovers.

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal

All non-traffic crashes that NHTSA identifies in its primary data collection programs are reviewed and coded into NTS. However, due to the challenges discussed above, there is still under-coverage of non-traffic crash data from the States. The NTS is a virtual data collection

tool designed to address requirements in Section 10305 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The NTS includes four types of incidents: non-traffic crash injuries, non-traffic crash fatalities, non-crash injuries, and non-crash fatalities. The non-traffic crash injuries and fatalities in NTS are sourced from police crash reports from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, and the Crash Report Sampling System and Crash Investigation Sampling System sample sites. The non-crash injuries are identified through the Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System – All Injury Program (NEISS-AIP). The NEISS-AIP provides national counts based on a sample of 100 emergency departments. The non-crash fatalities are based upon death certificate information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Vital Statistics System. NHTSA has a limited ability to access all of this information, and therefore applies factors to adjust the number of cases received to produce a national estimate.

I hope this information is helpful, and I look forward to sharing the NTS data with you in September. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Ron Thaniel, Director of Governmental and External Affairs at albert.thaniel@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Cliff", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steven S. Cliff, Ph.D.
Administrator