Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS)

Overview: General description of data source

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), which became operational in 1975, contains data on a census of fatal traffic crashes within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. To be included in FARS, a crash must involve a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public, and must result in the death of an occupant of a vehicle or a non-occupant within 30 days (720 hours) of the crash.

FARS is directed by the National Center for Statistics and Analysis (NCSA), which is a component of NHTSA. NHTSA has a cooperative agreement with an agency in each State's government to provide information on all qualifying fatal crashes in the State. These agreements are managed by NCSA's FARS Program staff. Trained State employees, called "FARS Analysts," are responsible for gathering, translating, and transmitting their State's data to NCSA in a standard format. The number of analysts varies by State.

FARS data are obtained from various States' documents, such as:

- Police Crash Reports
- Death Certificates
- State Vehicle Registration Files
- Coroner/Medical Examiner Reports
- State Driver Licensing Files
- State Highway Department Data
- Emergency Medical Service Reports
- Vital Statistics and other State Records

From these documents, the analysts code more than 100 FARS data elements. The specific data elements may be modified slightly each year to conform to changing user needs, vehicle characteristics, and highway safety emphasis areas. The data collected within FARS do not include any personal identifying information, such as names, addresses, or social security numbers. Thus, any data kept in FARS data files and made available to the public fully conform to the Privacy Act.

[Source: https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/811992]

Data owner

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

Data description and collection criteria

Fatal motor vehicle crashes involving a motor vehicle traveling on a trafficway customarily open to the public, and resulting in the death of a motorist or a non-motorist within 30 days of the crash.

Type of data: source or compiled/abstracted

Compiled/abstracted data

Are the data available to outside parties for analytical purposes?

Yes

Process to obtain the data for research

Data can be accessed via this online request page:
https://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Main/index.aspx

Website

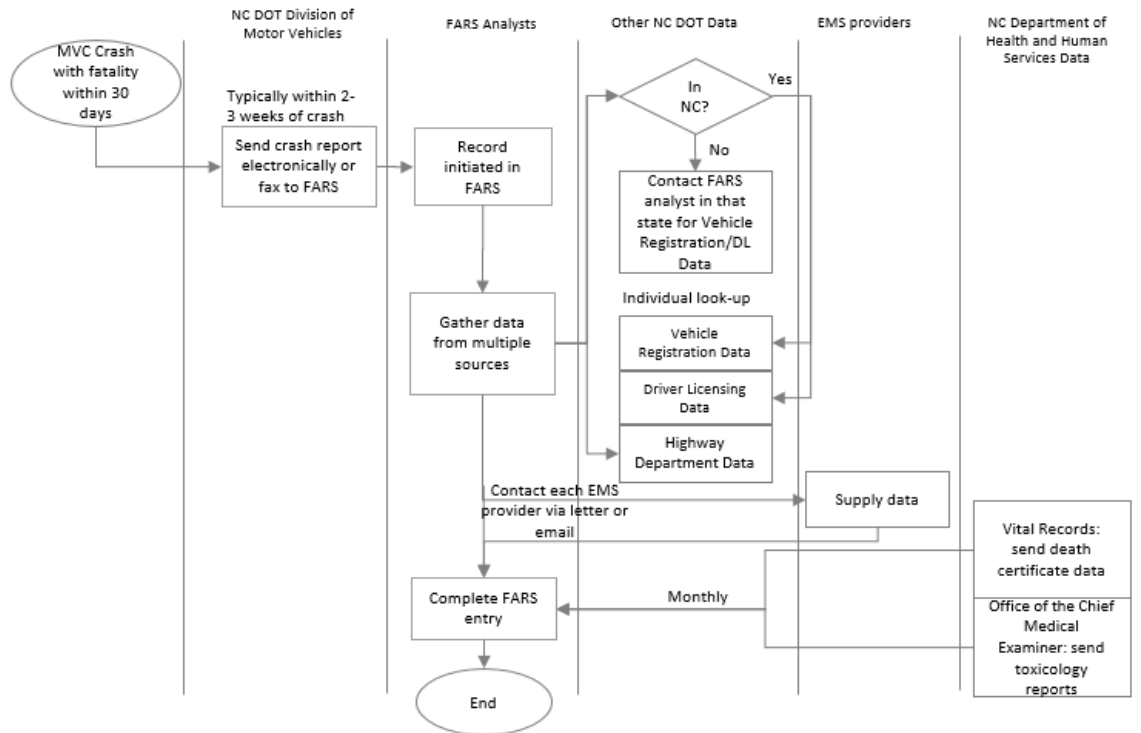https://www.nhtsa.gov/research-data/fatality-analysis-reporting-system-fars

Contact(s)

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Data Flowchart

Who enters the original data (Highway patrol officers, Healthcare providers, etc.)?
Two full-time FARS Analysts in Raleigh extract and compile data from data entered by multiple sources, including highway patrol officers, EMS providers, medical certifiers and medical examiners.

Injury classification: Injury classification method (ICD-10-CM, etc.)
KABCO

Collection timeframe: when the data were entered after original event
Extracted from original data sources so dependent on the timeframes for those sources

Years available: Description of timespan for which data are available
Every year since 1975; it takes approximately one year to finalize a year of records. 2017 data is projected to be complete in December 2018.

Data History: Key changes in the data that would affect research use
None

Is a data dictionary available?
Yes

Dictionary
Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Analytical User's Manual, 1975-2018

Field Mapping from Source Documentation
Source documentation field map

Report labels	Source labels (where available)
Table or category	
Field	Data element
Field-Literal	SAS
Description	Definition
Source comments	Remarks
Format	Format
Length	Format
Required (Y/N)	
Sensitive (Y/N)	
Unique key (Y/N)	
Retired Field (Y/N)	Discontinued note in Definition field
Retired Date	

Additional fields available in source documentation

- Consistency checks
- SAS Name

Quality and Performance Measures
Known data quality issues

None known. Each FARS analyst enters coded data through a local computer into NHTSA's central FARS Webaccessed database daily. The data is automatically checked online for acceptable range values and consistency, and again reviewed for quality upon arrival at NHTSA.

Range checks ensure that the codes submitted are valid. For example, a code "4" for the element "Sex" would be rejected by the system since "1" (male), "2" (female), and "9" (unknown) are the only valid codes.

Consistency checks ensure that no inconsistent data is entered. For example, if an analyst codes "11 a.m." as the time of the crash and "dusk" as the light condition, these codes would all be rejected, as they are inconsistent.

Quality control is a vital system feature. In addition to the range and consistency checks, other checks for timeliness, completeness, and accuracy are conducted throughout the year.

[Source: https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/811992]