N.O. area tops La. in wrecks involving booze

By RAYA TAHAN
Associated Press writer

NEW ORLEANS — A survey of traffic accidents by the Louisiana State Police found the highest number of alcohol-related wrecks and fatalities in suburban New Orleans.

Jefferson Parish saw 387 alcohol-related injury crashes, including 14 fatalities, from September 1997 to September 1998, according to data provided by Louisiana State Police.

St. Tammany Parish had 178 injury accidents in which 16 people died. Calcasieu and East Baton Rouge parishes each had 14 deaths while Calcasieu had 252 wrecks and East Baton Rouge had 199 accidents. As expected, highly populated areas have the most crashes, said Col. Jim Champagne of the Highway Safety Commission.

Injuries and deaths
The 15 parishes with the most alcohol-related injuries and deaths, as ranked by Louisiana State Police and the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking/Parish</th>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>Fatal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jefferson</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Calcasieu</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Caddo</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. East Baton Rouge</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. St. Tammany</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lafayette</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Terrebonne</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ouachita</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lafourche</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rapides</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Bossier</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Ascension</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Tangipahoa</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. St. Landry</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Livingston</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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— The Associated Press
A $400,000 federal grant pays troopers to work about 16,000 hours of overtime every year on traffic safety.

While the federal grant program is in its third year, this year is the first that State Police identified the most dangerous spots in each trooper, rather than blanketing the area, Champagne said.

"I know we are making a difference because we're finding the crashes that are going somewhere else," he said.

With alcohol to blame for 46 percent of wrecks, Louisiana has the nation's eighth-highest rate of alcohol-related crashes, he said.

"That's a terrible figure. We have such a propensity for drunken driving in this state.

Lafayette Parish had 12 deaths, the fifth-highest number in the State Police survey, and 162 wrecks. Terrebonne Parish had 150 crashes with 11 deaths and Calcasieu Parish had 211 crashes with 10 deaths.

Lafourche and Rapides parishes each had seven deaths. Lafourche saw 115 wrecks and Rapides saw 99 wrecks.

Ouachita rounded out the top ten with 126 crashes and six fatalities.

While alcohol still accounts for many of Louisiana's crashes, the aggressive driver is becoming more of a problem, Champagne said.

"Those are the guys that improperly change lanes. They run the stop signs. It's become an epidemic in Louisiana," he said. "We've let our concern for time erode general courtesy that we should be practicing on the road.

State Police figures also show that while the number of traffic arrests and the number of highways patrolled have climbed steadily in the past decade, the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities have gone up 70 percent in cases and stayed the same in others.

In 1990, State Police patrolled 9.3 million miles and made 92,131 traffic-related arrests. That year, there were 28,599 crashes, including 20,634 injuries and 582 deaths.

Projected figures for this year show State Police patrolling a lot more, 13.8 million miles and making 16,418 arrests.

Yet this year's crashes are expected to total 35,880, with 23,989 injuries and 578 deaths.

Lt. Mike Edmonson, a State Police spokesman, said deaths vary from year to year.

"That's something we just can't put our finger on. ... You go to some crashes where you wonder how some people lived, and you go to some crashes where you wonder how people died."

Champagne said the increased police presence is not enough to override the increased number of drivers and growing number of roads.

Edmonson estimates Louisiana has about 25 percent more registered vehicles than it did a decade ago.

The number of troopers assigned to traffic duty climbed from 389 in 1990 to 467 in 1995. But this year, that number is down to 400 because some troopers have been assigned to work on video poker, casinos and other Louisiana gambling ventures.

Champagne said the siphoning off of patrol troopers to help regulate gambling is the state's biggest traffic safety problem.

To offset that, State Police have asked the Legislature for enough money to hire 162 new road troopers and 38 new investigative troopers next year.

That should put every trooper up to about 70 percent of what it was designed to have as far as traffic troopers, Champagne said. "There's going to be a very decisive decision made that the state's police force guards the state's highways."

The most hazardous locations in each trooper area, as ranked by Louisiana State Police.

**Troop A**
- LA. 3249 at I-10, East Baton Rouge Parish
- U.S. 61 at LA. 621, Ascension Parish
- LA. 24 at LA. 44, Ascension Parish
- LA. 44, from LA. 42 to U.S. 61, Ascension Parish
- LA. 10 at LA. 19, East Feliciana Parish
- LA. 964 at milepost 1.1, East Baton Rouge Parish
- LA. 64 at U.S. 61, East Baton Rouge Parish
- LA. 42 at LA. 327 Spur, East Baton Rouge Parish
- LA. 447 at milepost 8, Livingston Parish
- LA. 12 at milepost 17, Livingston Parish

**Troop B**
- LA. 3046 at U.S. 90, Jefferson Parish
- LA. 10 from milepost 223 to 230, Jefferson Parish
- U.S. 61 at LA. 3188, St. John the Baptist Parish
- LA. 636 at LA. 44, St. John the Baptist Parish
- U.S. 61 at milepost 20.5, St. Charles Parish
- LA. 10 from milepost 202 to 205, St. John the Baptist Parish
- LA. 10 from milepost 209 to 224, St. Charles Parish
- LA. 39 from old LA. 46 to LA. 300, St. Bernard Parish
- LA. 23 from mile 1 to 22, Plaquemines Parish
- U.S. 90 at milepost 250, Jefferson Parish

**Troop C**
- LA. 24 at LA. 3052, Terrebonne Parish
- LA. 1, from milepost 67 to 673, Lafourche Parish
- LA. 3087 at LA. 24, Terrebonne Parish
- LA. 3040 at Parish Road 16, Terrebonne Parish
- LA. 1 at LA. 3162, Lafourche Parish
- LA. 311 at LA. 664, Terrebonne Parish
- LA. 1 at milepost 66, Lafourche Parish
- LA. 20 at Parish Road 29, Terrebonne Parish
- LA. 24 at LA. 3040, Terrebonne Parish
- LA. 1 from LA. 3189 to LA. 3199, Lafourche Parish

**Troop D**
- U.S. 171 at LA. 378, Calcasieu Parish
- U.S. 171 at LA. 3059, Calcasieu Parish
- LA. 10 at LA. 109, Calcasieu Parish
- LA. 27 at LA. 379, Calcasieu Parish
- LA. 27 at LA. 1133, Calcasieu Parish
- LA. 14 from milepost 18 to 22, Calcasieu Parish
- LA. 27 at Carlyss Drive, Calcasieu Parish
- U.S. 90 at CALCASIEU ROAD, Calcasieu Parish
- U.S. 90 at LA. 397, Calcasieu Parish
- U.S. 171 at Parish Road, Calcasieu Parish

**Troop E**
- LA. 3225 from milepost 76 to 79, Rapides Parish
- U.S. 171 from milepost 60 to 63, Vernon Parish
- LA. 1, from milepost 235 to 238, Avoyelles Parish
- U.S. 65 from milepost 3 to 8, Concordia Parish
- LA. 1 from milepost 240 to 244, Avoyelles Parish
- LA. 28 from milepost 60 to 64, Rapides Parish
- LA. 8 from milepost 20 to 26, Vernon Parish
- LA. 143 from milepost 54 to 58, Rapides Parish
- LA. 6 from milepost 49 to 51, Natchitoches Parish
- LA. 115 from milepost 25 to 27, Avoyelles Parish

**Troop F**
- U.S. 165 from milepost 192 to 195, Ouachita Parish
- LA. 20 from milepost 105 to 107, Ouachita Parish
- U.S. 80 from milepost 118 to 120, Ouachita Parish
- LA. 34 from milepost 68 to 75, Ouachita Parish
- U.S. 425 from milepost 28 to 31, Morehouse Parish
- LA. 120 from milepost 130 to 133, Richland Parish
- LA. 80 from milepost 145 to 147, Richland Parish
- LA. 20 from milepost 93 to 95, Lincoln Parish
- LA. 20 from milepost 165 to 175, Madison Parish
- LA. 80 from milepost 142 to 147, Franklin Parish

**Troop G**
- U.S. 80 at LA. 157, Bossier Parish
- U.S. 80 at Belleview Road, Bossier Parish
- U.S. 71 at LA. 527, Bossier Parish
- SLIGO Road at ArkPlanet Road, Bossier Parish
- U.S. 80 at LA. 531, Webster Parish
- LA. 147 from milepost 37 to 40, Bienville Parish
- LA. 4 from milepost 13 to 22, Bienville Parish
- U.S. 79 from milepost 60 to 69, Claiborne Parish
- LA. 175 from milepost 40 to 50, DeSoto Parish
- LA. 120 from milepost 40 to 53, Webster Parish

**Troop I**
- U.S. 90 at LA. 88, Iberia Parish
- U.S. 90 at LA. 675, Iberia Parish
- U.S. 90 at LA. 14, Iberia Parish
- U.S. 90 at LA. Captain Cade Road, Iberia Parish
- U.S. 90 at LA. 318, St. Mary Parish
- LA. 10 from milepost 74 to 85, Acadia Parish
- LA. 14 from milepost 20 to 41, St. Landry/Evangeline Parish
- U.S. 190 from milepost 86 to 112, St. Landry/Evangeline Parish
- LA. 182 from milepost 42 to 81, Iberia/Lafayette Parish
- LA. 31 from milepost 2 to 10, Iberia/Lafayette Parish

**Troop L**
- LA. 12 from milepost 34 to 43, Tangipahoa Parish
- U.S. 15 from milepost 27 to 29, Tangipahoa Parish
- U.S. 190 from milepost 242 to 251, St. Tammany Parish
- LA. 10 from milepost 225 to 269, St. Tammany Parish
- LA. 10 from milepost 22 to 25, Washington Parish
- LA. 16 from milepost 47 to 53, St. Helena Parish
- LA. 59 from milepost 0 to 9, St. Tammany Parish
- U.S. 190 from milepost 0 to 8, St. Tammany Parish
- LA. 22 from milepost 43 to 58, Tangipahoa Parish

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