



NCFOR

National Coalition for Open Roads

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Former Utah Governor Calls for Drivers to Slow Down Utah Valley Chamber Joins National Effort for Better Winter Road Safety

(Salt Lake City) Former Utah Governor Gary Herbert and the Utah Valley Chamber of Commerce have joined forces with the National Coalition for Open Roads ([NCFOR](#)) to encourage safer winter driving by the public and a continued commitment towards winter road maintenance by state, county, and city officials.

“In the past few weeks, we’ve had a driver cited for going 102 miles per hour in winter conditions and at least three state police cars have been hit during recent storms. Drivers need to slow down. With more snow on the way, let’s be our best selves behind the wheel, especially during tricky road conditions,” said Herbert who served as Utah’s governor from 2009 through 2021 and now serves as the executive chairman of the Utah Valley Chamber of Commerce.

According to the [Federal Highway Administration](#), over 1,700 Americans are killed each year due to accidents involving snowy, slushy, and icy roads.

Utah’s neighboring state of [Wyoming has the highest percentage of fatal crashes due to snowy road conditions](#), averaging 34 fatalities per one million registered drivers annually based on an analysis by CarInsuranceComparison.com. Rounding out the top five states with the highest percentage of fatalities due to winter road accidents are, in order, North Dakota, Nebraska, Vermont, and Alaska. Utah comes in at twenty-second.

“Our positive ranking is a tribute to state legislators, transportation officials, the Highway Patrol, and snowplow drivers who are doing a good job, but with Utah’s continued growth it feels like we have to sprint just to keep up. That’s why we’ve teamed up with the National Coalition for Open Roads. Everyone has a role to play,” Herbert said.

While Utah is succeeding in many areas, NCFOR officials noted that [Utah has double the winter road death fatality rate of Colorado](#) which averages 1.41 deaths per one million registered drivers. Utah’s fatality rate is 2.95 which ranks lower than Idaho with a winter road fatality rate of 4.8.

NCFOR officials recently warned western states, including Utah, about an ongoing [shortage of snowplow drivers](#) which may be a factor in winter road deaths and offered suggestions to

address the issue, including increasing snowplow driver salaries, creating housing allowances to recruit and retain drivers in high-cost areas, and considering offering hardship pay for positions in remote areas.

Curtis Blair, President and CEO of the Utah Valley Chamber said that better winter roads have a direct impact on businesses and individuals.

“Saving lives is the number one priority, no question. NCFOR is also trying to help address the costs to business and people because of delayed goods, lost wages, and higher insurance rates due to bad driving and poorly maintained winter roads. The quicker roads are treated and plowed, the better for business and public safety,” Blair said.

A 2010 study by HIS Global Insight found that closed roads and highways from a major winter snowstorm [could cost the state of Utah \\$66 million a day](#). “With inflation and higher fuel costs, we expect the numbers are significantly higher today,” said Blair. He added that the Federal Highway Administration’s website reports that [each year trucking companies lose \\$2.2 to \\$3.5 billion dollars due to weather-related delays](#).

“When state transportation departments have adequate funds, they can hire the people they need to get the job done. Right now, that’s a challenge legislators need to address,” said Roger Knoph, chairman of the National Coalition for Open Roads, which has offices in Utah and Washington, DC.

The National Coalition for Open Roads’ mission is to help build bridges between the public and public institutions and educate all parties relating to the impacts of winter storms on safety, the economy, and the environment.

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