

Richard P. Compton

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Richard P. Compton, Ph.D., is the Director of the Office of Behavioral Safety Research at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (“NHTSA”). He joined NHTSA over 38 years ago as a Research Psychologist in the Office of Research and Development. Over the years he has designed, directed and authored numerous research studies in the areas of alcohol and drug-impaired driving, occupant protection, young drivers, older drivers, and speeding and other unsafe driving actions, especially in relation to the evaluation of new technology, sanctions, enforcement and public information and education. He has conducted evaluations of national, state and local traffic safety programs to determine their effectiveness.

He received his Ph.D. degree in experimental psychology from the University of Nebraska in 1977 and has taught a variety of courses at the University level. He is a member of the American Psychological Association and the Human Factors Society. He is on the Executive Board of the International Council on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety. He is also a member of the Transportation Research Board's Committee on Alcohol, Other Drugs and Transportation, Committee on Operator Education and Regulation, and the Subcommittee on Young Drivers, Strategic Highway Research Program Safety Technical Coordinating Committee, as well as the Executive Board of the National Safety Council's Division on Alcohol, Drugs and Impairment (formerly the Committee on Alcohol and Other Drugs).

In 2015, he received the National Safety Council's Robert F. Borckenstein Award (National Safety Council presents this award to individuals who have made outstanding contributions through a lifetime of service in the area of alcohol/drugs in relation to traffic and transportation safety).

In 2016, he was the recipient of the Human Factors and Ergonomic Society's – A. R. Lauer Award (that recognizes a person for outstanding contributions to human factors aspects in the broad area of safety, including work that has led to reduced crashes and injuries in such areas as surface transportation).

He is currently responsible for directing NHTSA's behavioral safety research program that encompasses such topics as alcohol and drug impaired driving, occupant protection (seat belt use and child passenger protection), speeding, older drivers, young drivers, driver licensing and driver education, motorcycle safety, pedestrian and bicycle safety, school bus safety, emergency medical services, drowsy and distracted driving, and international programs.