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# Kansas City drivers among worst in nation, study finds

BY ROBERT A. CRONKLETON  
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Kansas City drivers are among the most dangerous in the nation, according to a new study that reviewed traffic fatalities. Two neighboring communities also didn't fare much better.

ConsumerAffairs, a news and research site, analyzed the latest

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration crash data and found Kansas City ranked sixth worst overall for dangerous driving.

What's especially notable is Kansas City's dramatic jump in the rankings.

"Quite a big jump from the 245th spot last year," said Lauren Jobe, a media relations specialist with ConsumerAffairs.

Two key factors drove Kansas

City to this dubious spot, Jobe said: speeding deaths and fatal crashes involving alcohol.

"But in Kansas City, we actually saw across all five metrics that we looked, they got worse in every single one," Jobe said. "Those two that I mentioned first are really the biggest drivers, but all the other categories definitely played a part."

Memphis claimed the top spot for the third year in a row. Other

cities in the Top 10 are Knoxville, Tennessee; Waterbury, Connecticut; Aurora, Colorado; Tucson, Arizona; San Bernardino, California; Billings, Montana; Miami Gardens, Florida; and Charleston, South Carolina.

Closer to home, Kansas City, Kansas, was ranked No. 33, and Independence came in at No. 39. Meanwhile, suburban cities like Lee's Summit (No. 259), Olathe (No. 302) and Overland

Park (No. 306), were among the safest places to drive out of the 327 cities compared.

**WHAT MAKES KANSAS CITY SO DANGEROUS?**

No other Midwest city ranks higher in dangerous driving than Kansas City in the study. The city's overall traffic fatality rate was 19.28 per 100,000 residents, significantly higher than the national rate of 12.31.

Deaths attributed to speeding were especially alarming, according to the study. The rate more than tripled from 2.8 last year to 10.6 per 100,000 people this year, Jobe said. That's the second-highest rate in the nation and about three times the

**SEE DRIVERS, 3A**



PICTURE ALLIANCE/USA TODAY NETWORK

US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth at the Ukraine Summit on August 18, 2025, at the White House in Washington. The decision to allow National Guard units to carry guns paves the way for the nearly 2,000 troops mobilized in the district to expand their operations.

# National Guard to carry guns in Washington, D.C.

BY LISA HORNUNG  
UPI

U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth has authorized members of the National Guard who are patrolling Washington,

D.C., to begin carrying weapons on duty, a Defense official said.

The new authority is expected to become effective in coming days, the person told ABC News, CNN and Fox News.

The decision paves the way for the nearly 2,000 troops

mobilized in the district to expand their operations, including possible security patrols in neighborhoods that struggle with crime.

"At the direction of the Secretary of Defense, [Joint Task Force]-DC members supporting

the mission to lower the crime rate in our nation's capital will soon be on mission with their service-issued weapons, consistent with their mission and training," the official said.

President Donald Trump visited with National Guard personnel Thursday and suggested the military would be playing a larger role in law enforcement in the city.

"You got to be strong, you got to be tough," Trump told Guard personnel at the U.S. Park Po-

**SEE NATIONAL GUARD, 2A**

# Frank White says he won't run again due to health

BY ILANA AROUGHETI  
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Jackson County Executive Frank White shared this week that health concerns played a role in his decision to step down at the end of his term and not to run again for his seat in 2026, regardless of the results of an upcoming election to recall him.

White, a Democrat, has been County Executive since 2016. The former Kansas City Royals player and Hall of Famer told a Kansas City podcaster earlier this month that he would not seek re-election in 2026. He affirmed his decision in a Wednesday letter addressed to "Jackson County associates."

"This was not an easy decision," White wrote. "Serving in this role has been one of the greatest honors of my life, and I am deeply proud of the work we have accomplished together."

White followed the letter with a news release Thursday stating that he is currently "cancer-free" after being diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2022. One of White's kidneys was removed as part of his treatment, he wrote, and early intervention contributed to his recovery.

"This job has been one of the greatest honors of my life, but after my diagnosis, I knew I wanted more time with Teresa, my children, and my grandchildren," White wrote. "Until then, I remain committed to

**SEE WHITE, 3A**

# Farid Azzeh, pioneer of Middle Eastern fare in KC, dies

BY DAVID HUDNALL  
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Farid Azzeh, the founder of Jerusalem Café and a pioneer of Middle Eastern cuisine in Kansas City, died August 18 after a two-year battle with cancer and liver disease. He was 66.

He leaves behind his wife, Souhair, with whom he would

have celebrated 38 years of marriage Friday, and three sons — Dennis, Adam, and Eddy.

Azzeh also leaves behind an unmatched legacy of Middle Eastern restaurants in the Kansas City area. His influence can be found not just in the three Jerusalem Café locations still run by his sons Dennis and Adam, but in a number of other restaurants that trace their roots

to him. Azzeh opened both KC Smoke Burgers and Jerusalem Bakery (now Mediterranean Market), later selling the businesses to employees. The owners of Aladdin's Café on 39th Street worked for Azzeh in Lawrence and later bought that location from him. The founder of Holy Land Café got his start at Jerusalem Café.

His nephews, Fouad and Firas

Haha, run Haha's Pizza Hub and Haha's Kebab and Shawarma — ventures they say would not exist without Azzeh's guidance.

"We learned A to Z from him," Fouad said. "Without him we wouldn't be in the food industry. He's a legend to us. He wasn't just an uncle. He was a father figure, a friend, a boss. All at once."

Azzeh made his first mark on Kansas City's food scene in 1989, when he opened the Westport Sizzler at 431 Westport Road.

"It was five tables with a food counter inside, and he would

grill on the sidewalk outside," Dennis said. "It was just him and my mom working, and me in a car seat under one of the booths. He served charbroiled kebabs and hot dogs and other things."

Within a year, Azzeh saw that customers preferred his Mediterranean menu items. He re-named the restaurant Jerusalem Café and leaned into dishes like falafel, baba ganoush, gyros, and tabbouleh salad.

It was one of Kansas City's first Middle Eastern restaurants, introducing flavors that were

**SEE AZZEH, 3A**