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Traffic Deaths, Murders Surge Over Russia's Long Holiday Period

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Moskva News Agency

New Year's Eve and the extended Orthodox Christmas festivities not only bring holiday cheer to Russians but also a spike in traffic deaths and homicides.

National traffic police told Interfax on Thursday that 227 people, including 10 children, died in 1,700 traffic accidents between Jan. 1 and Jan. 8.

Drunk driving was blamed on 100 of the accidents which killed 12 people, traffic police added.

Overall, however, traffic police told the news agency that there were fewer car accidents in most Russian regions compared to the same period in 2018.

Related article: Russia's January Spike in Deaths Linked to Holiday Drinking

Murders also surge during the week-long holiday period.

An average of 250 Russians are murdered on New Year's Eve alone each year, according to Vladimir Kudryavtsev, a criminology expert at the European University in St. Petersburg.

In a column published Wednesday by the Vedomosti daily, Kudryavstev wrote that around 75 to 90 people are killed during other holidays, which in itself is almost double the average daily murder rate of 44.

"Celebrations in Russia involve a gathering of close relatives," Kudryavtsev writes, "and conversations on topics potentially prone to conflicts."

"Given that an average murder — often under the influence of alcohol — is carried out against friends and relatives in residential areas in Russia," he adds, "any widely celebrated holiday becomes a kind of 'Petri dish.'" ⊠

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