Isaac adds new concerns to **Labor Day travel**

AAA South Dakota is still projecting 69,000 South Dakotans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the Labor Day holiday weekend, a three percent increase from the 67,000 South Dakotans who traveled last year.

Nationwide, the total number of expected travelers -33 million – is a 2.9 percent boost over year ago numbers and the strongest Labor Day travel period since 2008, marking a new post-recession high.

It's the third increase in holiday travel this year, according to the AAA/IHS Global Insight. AAA's Memorial Day and July 4 holiday travel forecasts projected increases of 1.2 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively.

However, Tropical Storm Isaac could add a wrinkle to travel plans for some. Isaac is already impacting travel, disrupting flights and cruises in the southeastern U.S. and the Caribbean. Hundreds of flights have been cancelled in Florida, and cruise lines such as Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruises have changed some itineraries due to Isaac. AAA South Dakota reminds flyers to check with their travel agents and to consider purchasing travel insurance.

'Whether or not the elements of Tropical Storm Isaac will impact travel in our area, we know an increase in gas prices (perhaps as much as 10 cents per gallon) is likely to occur ahead of Labor Day," said Marilyn Buskohl, spokeswoman for AAA South Dakota. "With more people expected to travel this year than last, we know the roadways will be busy. For many people, Labor Day weekend is one last opportunity to get away before returning to regular work and school schedules. It's unlikely that many South Dakotans will alter their travel plans in light of Isaac and higher gas prices. AAA advises all travelers to be safe and pack their

patience." Automobile travel up

travelers (eight percent of holiday travelers) will fly during the Labor Day weekend, a 3.7 percent increase over 2011 when 2.46 million traveled by air. In 2010, 2.6 million chose to fly to their Labor Day vacation destinations, which began the steady recovery from the decade-low 1.5 million air travelers in 2009. Airfares decreased four percent compared to last year with an average lowest round-trip rate of \$197 for the top 40 U.S. air routes, according to AAA's Leisure Travel Index.

The remaining seven percent of U.S. Labor Day holiday travelers are expected to use other modes of transportation, including cruise ship, rail, multi-modal and bus travel, accounting for 2.3 million Americans – a 0.2 percent decrease from last year.

Travel distances increase, spending is up

According to a survey of intended travelers,

the average distance traveled by Americans during the Labor Day holiday weekend is expected to be 626 miles, up slightly from last year's average 608 miles. Despite the longer average travel distance, about half of holiday travelers (54 percent) will be taking shorterdistance trips, between 100 and 400 round-trip miles. The increase in expected air travel is a contributing factor to the slight lift in the average travel distance as air trips typically span longer distances than automobile trips, many more than 1,500 round-trip miles.

Median spending is expected to total \$749, a small

increase over the \$702 median spending of intended holiday travelers in 2011.

Travelers to experience increase in hotel rates and a decrease in car rental rates

According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, Labor Day holiday hotel rates for AAA Three Diamond lodgings are expected to increase four percent from a year ago with travelers spending an average of \$154 per night compared to \$148 last year. Travelers planning to stay at AAA Two Diamond hotels can expect to pay six percent more for an average cost of \$117 per night. Weekend daily car rental rates will average \$39, a ten percent decrease from one year ago.

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The free AAA Mobile app for iPhone and Android devices uses GPS navigation to help travelers map a route, find current gas prices and nearby member discounts and access AAA roadside assistance. Information about the AAA Mobile app and AAA Mobile Web can be found at AAA.com/mobile.

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AAA.com/Travel. And for the latest gasoline prices, click on Fuel News & Tools in the AAA News & Safety section at AAA.com.

Labor Day travel projections are based on economic forecasting and research by IHS Global Insight. The Bostonbased economic research and consulting firm teamed with AAA in 2009 to jointly analyze travel trends during major holidays. AAA has been reporting on holiday travel trends for more than two decades.

The complete AAA/IHS Global Insight 2012 Independence Day Holiday Travel Forecast can be found at NewsRoom.AAA.com.





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3.1 percent

Across the U.S., about 28.2 million people (85 percent of all holiday travelers) will make their Labor Day holiday journey by automobile. This is a 3.1 percent increase over the 27.3 million people who took to the nation's roadways in 2011. This year's Labor Day holiday travel period runs from Thursday, Aug. 30 through Monday, Sept. 3.

Number of air travelers expected to increase by 3.7 percent, airfares decrease Labor Day holiday air travel nationally has been fairly consistent since the recession bounce-back began for the travel industry in 2010. About 2.55 million leisure

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