

**Remarks Prepared for
Jeffrey W. Runge, MD
Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

**Lifesavers 22
NHTSA Awards Luncheon
March 29, 2004**

I. Acknowledgements

[Acknowledge David Manning]

- *(Slide #1: Title Slide)* This is an impressive group assembled here today.
- It is impressive because the past year has witnessed several road safety milestones. Those milestones have only been reached because of the people in this room.
- *(Slide #2: photo of Mineta and Bush)* Both President Bush and Secretary Mineta understand the importance of traffic safety and are clear when they tell us that safety is their #1 transportation priority.

II. Priorities 2004 and Beyond

- *(Slide #3: Persons Killed and Rate)* Your commitment to our task is critical because in 2002:
 - Nearly 43,000 people were killed on our roadways
 - Almost 3 million more were injured
 - But over the long haul we have seen progress:
 - The traffic fatality rate has dropped dramatically since the mid-60s.
 - By 2002, the rate was 1.5 deaths per 100M VMT.
- *(Slide #4: Goal is Challenging)* Although progress in reducing fatalities has leveled off in the past few years, the Bush Administration is determined to take the necessary action to cut fatality rates by 2008 to not more than 1 death per 100 million VMT.
- *(Slide #5: Highway Safety Priorities)* The data have shown us what our priorities must be:

- Increase safety belt use
- Reduce impaired driving
- Improve our data collection and analysis
- Reduce rollovers
- Improve vehicle compatibility

III. Priorities - Belts

- ***(Slide #6: Safety Belt Use Rates from 2003 Lifesavers)*** Last year when we were together in Chicago I used this very slide to illustrate the progress we had made with safety belt use.
- At that time we were looking ahead, hoping to reach a national use rate of 78% for 2003.
- ***(Slide #7: NOPUS 79%)*** We were all thrilled when the final number came in for 2003: 79%!
- ***(Slide #8: State Safety Belt Laws 2004)*** Here is what we are facing this year.
 - 20 states with a primary safety belt law.
 - 29 states have secondary laws.
 - New Hampshire has no adult belt use law.
- ***(Slide #9: Delaware and Illinois State Seals)*** During the last year 2 states, Delaware and Illinois, enacted a primary safety belt law. I want to recognize the representatives here from those states.

[ASK ATTENDEES FROM DELAWARE AND ILLINOIS TO STAND FOR A MOMENT TO BE RECOGNIZED.]

- ***(Slide #10: Safety Belts Save Lives)*** While safety improved for the citizens of those 2 states, everyone is not so lucky. Safety belts save lives, yet many people still refuse to buckle up.
 - Of the nearly 33,000 occupants killed in passenger vehicles in 2002, 59% were unbelted.
 - About half of those unbelted people would be alive today if only they had buckled up.
- ***(Slide #11: Safety Belt Use Rates by Law and State)*** While every state needs a primary safety belt law, we also need to ensure that the laws, both secondary and primary, are vigorously and consistently enforced.
- ***(Slide #12: black slide)*** Even with a secondary law, some states saw a tremendous bump up in their safety belt use last year.

- **Arizona was one of these, with a 12-percentage point increase in belt use** in a single year. From 2002 to 2003 they were able to boost their belt use from 74% to 86%!
- *(Slide #13: Arizona et al State Seals)* There were some other **secondary law states** that also posted very impressive results with their safety belt campaigns last year. **Alaska, Utah and Idaho all experienced substantial increases in 2003** compared to the prior year.
- *(Slide #14: Indiana et al State Seals)* There were a number of **primary law states** that obtained major increases in safety belt use last year including **Indiana, Georgia, Washington, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Illinois**.
- We had another first last year. Washington State achieved the distinction of having the highest belt use in the nation in 2003 *and* the highest rate in history for this country.

[ASK ATTENDEES FROM ARIZONA, ALASKA, UTAH, IDAHO INDIANA, GEORGIA, IOWA, ILLINOIS, AND OKLAHOMA, STATE of WASHINGTON TO STAND AND BE RECOGNIZED.]

- *(Slide #15: New York State Seal)* We would be remiss if we didn't take a moment to recognize New York. Twenty years ago New York State passed the first primary safety belt law in the nation. Over that period **xxxx number of lives** have been saved.

[ASK ATTENDEES FROM NEW YORK TO STAND UP AND BE RECOGNIZED.]

- *(Slide #16: Safety Belt Benefits)* Let's sum this up.
- The work you did meant that the nation experienced an overall 4-percentage point increase in safety belt use in 2003 as compared to the previous year. This rise of 4 percentage points resulted in an estimated:
 - 11.2 million more people buckling up
 - 1,080 lives saved
 - \$3.3 million in cost savings
 - Reduced severity of more than 16,000 moderate to critical injuries
- *(Slide #17: Mobilizations 2004 and 2005)* Looking ahead, these are the dates for the 2004 and 2005 campaigns. Notice that we will sponsor one national mobilization each year.
- We know the *Click It or Ticket* model works.

- The States' experience with this approach has varied greatly depending on whether they implemented the entire CIOT model or just part of it.
- *(Slide #18: CIOT Results)* Last year we found that those states following all components, including paid/earned media and highly visible enforcement, showed a 9-percentage point increase.
- Those following only portions of the model posted a more modest 3-percentage point gain.
- But real, effective enforcement is 365 days a year, 24/7.
- **Remember: the impact of high-visibility enforcement is not just in the number of arrests. The real impact is the public's perception of what will happen if they fail to buckle up.**

IV. Priorities – Impaired Driving

- *(Slide #19: Alcohol Fatalities 82 – 02)* Turning now to impaired driving, the news is mixed.
- In 2002 more than 17,400 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes.
- The median BAC for impaired drivers in fatal crashes is 0.16—twice the legal limit in most states.
- *(Slide #20: Map of A/R Rates, 2002)* With a 2002 national alcohol fatality rate of .61 and a goal for the country by the end of this year of .53, you can see how far we have to go.
- Many States have reached or even exceeded the national goal. Unfortunately, too many more have much work ahead of them.
- *(Slide #21: Strategies for Reducing Impaired Driving)* Alcohol impairment is a complex social problem with a range of potential countermeasures.
- But to break through and make progress, we need to focus our energy on a few critical areas:
 - High visibility law enforcement (sobriety checkpoints or saturation patrols);
 - Improving our DWI adjudicatory system via the expansion of DWI courts and special prosecutors; and
 - Mobilizing our health care professionals to conduct routine screening and brief intervention for potential alcohol abuse problems in adults and adolescents.

- **(Slide #22: High Visibility Enforcement)** The public must perceive that if you drive impaired, you will be caught.
- The message is general deterrence, and it is conveyed through high visibility enforcement. This is enough for most people to get them to do the right thing.
- The public is solidly behind law enforcement on this. Nearly 97% of Americans view impaired driving as a threat to their community.
- **(Slide #23: California A/R fatalities by County)** Each state has “hot spots,” areas in the greatest need of DWI intervention. Those areas have the greatest number or frequency of impaired driving deaths. They are areas where you can do the most good by focusing your efforts.
- **(Slide #24: Crackdown dates)** In past years the National Crackdowns against impaired driving took place each July and December.
- After talking with our partners we have shifted the impaired driving Crackdown to focus around the Labor Day period. The data indicate that more alcohol-related fatalities have taken place around the Labor Day holiday than December holidays.
 - The impaired driving Crackdown, *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.*, will take place over 3 consecutive weekends in late August and early September.
- This schedule captures the high fatality summertime period, allows recovery time between mobilizations, and permits grant funding to be processed in time to support State activity.
- **(Slide #25: DWI Courts and Special Prosecutors)** Prosecuting DWI cases is complex; a high percentage of acquittals or case dismissals undermines our efforts to deter offenders.
- These cases both need and deserve experienced prosecutors.
- We must ensure that prosecutors receive the training, specialized knowledge and the support they need to succeed.
- DWI cases are complex and recidivism among offenders is high.
- Expanded use of DWI courts is another tool to reduce impaired driving.
- DWI courts are effective in improving case management. They ensure that offenders comply with sentencing and treatment, which can reduce recidivism.

- Currently there are 80 DWI courts across the nation. In addition there are 1,500 drug courts nationwide. We need more.
- *(Slide #26: Screening and Brief Intervention)* There is compelling evidence in scientific and medical literature showing that alcohol screening and brief intervention is effective in decreasing consumption in at-risk drinkers.
- Impaired driving is often a symptom of a larger problem of alcohol misuse.
 - Of the more than 107 million people who seek care in emergency departments every year, substantial numbers of injured patients have evidence of alcohol-use problems.
 - Almost 1 in 6 crash victims at trauma centers test positive for alcohol.
- We have started work with national leaders in the fields of medicine, alcoholism and related areas to establish screening as the norm for routine care.
- We want to see health care providers regularly perform screening and brief intervention with their patients just as they now screen patients for diabetes or high blood pressure. [**Mention Alcohol Screening Day – April 8**]

V. Priorities – Data

- *(Slide #27: Quality Data System Features)* Good data should be:
 - Timely
 - Accurate
 - Complete
 - Compatible
 - Integrated
 - Accessible
- *(Slide #28: State and Community Traffic Data)* Much of the national data we rely on starts with local data that originate with many of you.
- Data are critical to establishing safety priorities, developing interventions, monitoring progress and making funding decisions.
- They are so critical to everything we do that we formed an integrated project team, an IPT, around this topic just as we did for impaired driving, safety belts, rollover and vehicle compatibility.
- The team developed a vision of the future for traffic safety data. I expect that report to be on our web site in mid-April.

VI. SAFETEA

- *(Slide #29: SAFETEA Key Elements)* Data have been the foundation for the funding increase proposed under the Department of Transportation's reauthorization bill, SAFETEA.
- Meanwhile, let me mention that over its 6-year life, SAFETEA contains more than twice the safety funding of its predecessor.
- It contains both performance grants and incentive grants for states not only for improved data collection but also for enactment of primary belt laws and more aggressive Crackdowns on impaired drivers.
- At its core, the bill is **flexible - the F in SAFETEA** - allowing States to use the funds to address their own priority areas.
- And States will be held **accountable - the A in SAFETEA** - for their results.
- Congress needs to pass a responsible bill as soon as possible.
- We can no longer delay providing States the resources they need to reduce highway deaths.
- *(Slide #30: Every State Must Have A Strategic Highway Safety Plan)* Under SAFETEA, each State seeking to use safety incentive funds for either driver behavior or infrastructure purposes must develop a strategic highway safety plan.
- **This Plan is the key to getting maximum flexibility for the use of funds under SAFETEA.**
- Be aware that this is going on. Make sure you participate through your Governor's Highway Safety Office, State DOT, State police or State planning agency.

VII. Speed

- *(Slide #31: Photo of speeding cars)* The resources provided to states are best used to meet the specific and unique needs of each state based on that state's data.
- Perhaps your own data shows that speeding is a problem in your state.
- Over the past several years NHTSA has concentrated significant resources on the 2 leading factors in motor vehicle crashes and fatalities – occupant protection and impaired driving.

- But now that we have a handle on these initial priorities I want to turn more attention to the 3rd leading factor - speeding.
- Speeding continues to be cited as a major factor in almost one-third (32%) of traffic fatalities nationally and is estimated to cost \$40 billion each year.
- The data also tell us that the most significant problems are on local roadways and collector roads.
- This is a problem that cannot be ignored.
- The Department of Transportation has a speeding management team with members from FHWA, FMCSA and NHTSA.
- The speeding team from these 3 agencies is currently co-sponsoring demonstration projects around the country focused on setting, enforcing and adjudicating *rational* speed limits.
- In these demo projects we will be evaluating the impact of an interdisciplinary, coordinated approach to manage speed.
- These projects will provide guidance for us in those areas where we really need a better foundation:
 - Uniform coding and data
 - Public awareness and education (state workshops to educate partners)
 - Technological and engineering solutions
 - Enforcement (strict enforcement/responsive adjudication)
- The projects will employ a variety of approaches including technological solutions, but remember - using technologies to assist law enforcement is just one answer.
- Sometimes technology can be especially helpful when it is just not possible to place an officer on every corner at all times.
- The use of enforcement technology also allows re-deployment of police officer personnel for other traffic enforcement activities.
- If we are to achieve any success in dealing with the problem of excessive speed all of these approaches must be woven together into a comprehensive strategy.
- Ultimately, it will take a combination of traditional enforcement, improved data collection, public education, technology and engineering to fully address the problem.

XI. Closing

- *(Slide #32: NHTSA logo)* Thank you for all you do each day to make people safer and to improve the quality of life in our communities nationwide.
- When things look good on the national level, it is because of what every one of you does.
- Later on we will recognize those of you who have been selected by your peers for particular recognition. But now, let's enjoy our lunch.

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