TEXAS
Safe and Sober Selective Traffic Enforcement Program

Problem Identification

Of the 3,106 fatal traffic crashes investigated in Texas in 1999, 28.4 percent involved alcohol impairment, 32.9 percent involved excess speed, and 40.9 percent of all fatalities were not wearing safety belts. The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) proposed using overtime funding to target eighteen counties around the state where incidences of non-compliance with Driving While Intoxicated (DWI), speed, occupant restraint laws, and related traffic crashes were likely to occur. The availability of manpower is an obstacle in determining which counties to target. A sufficient number of troopers have to be available in a given region to make the project successful.

Goals and Objectives

The *Safe and Sober Selective Traffic Enforcement Program's (STEP)* goal is to reduce traffic fatalities caused by excess speed, failure to wear safety belts, and impaired drivers.

The project's objectives are to:

- Increase the percentage of vehicles in compliance with the speed limit by five percent;
- Increase the total number of speed citations issued by 36 percent;
- Increase DWI arrests by 27 percent;
- Increase safety belt use among drivers and front seat passengers by five percent; and
- Increase the total number of occupant protection (OP) citations issued by 72 percent.

Strategies and Activities

The *Safe and Sober Selective Traffic Enforcement Program* implemented the following strategies to achieve its goals:

- Targeted 18 counties with a high number of DWI violations, speed non-compliance, and low safety belt use
- Organized concentrated patrols in areas with a history of alcohol-related crashes, during times when alcohol-impaired drivers are frequently driving
- Patrolled highways with a high concentration of late night drinking and entertainment establishments

- Conducted concentrated patrols during holiday periods with a history of alcohol-related crashes

- Deployed concentrated patrols targeting stretches of highway with a history of a large number of motorists who are non-compliant with speed laws

- Focused additional attention on areas with a history of speed-related crashes

- Targeted heavy commuter times for frequent patrols

- Conducted patrols in all areas of the selected counties during daylight hours to detect drivers and passengers violating occupant restraint laws

- Targeted drivers who failed to use safety belts and have child occupants properly restrained

Results

The *Safe and Sober Selective Traffic Enforcement Program* achieved the following results from October 1, 2002 to September 30, 2003:

- Increased the percentage of vehicles in compliance with the speed limit by 11.6 percent

- Increased the number of speed citations issued by 30.1 percent

- Increased DWI arrests by 60.1 percent

- Increased safety belt use among drivers and front seat passengers by 2.1 percent

- Increased the number of OP citations issued by 95.2 percent

- Issued a total of 90,777 speeding citations (including STEP)

The project fell short of the target by 4,078 citations due to a greater emphasis placed on DWI and occupant protection violations during the project period. Total DWI arrests exceeded the project target by 2,044 arrests and occupant protection citations exceeded the project target by 5,234 citations.

Post project surveys indicate safety belt use only increased 2.1 percent instead of the anticipated five percent. As statewide safety belt use increases, an increase of two to three percent was a more realistic goal for this project. Speed and DWI-related crash data for the project period, which will help to measure the project's impact, is not yet available.