

Building Safe Communities

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EMS and Law Enforcement

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and law enforcement agencies have traditionally been key players in traffic safety at the local level. In recent years, these agencies have taken a more active role in prevention. Community policing has demonstrated the value of prevention and community involvement to law enforcement agencies. *Emergency Medical Services Agenda for the Future*, which outlines the future direction of the nation's EMS system, states, "EMS systems should support the Safe Communities and Safe America concepts." This issue of *Building Safe Communities* examines why EMS and law enforcement agencies are essential partners for any Safe Communities coalition. ■

Ending the "Senior Curse"

In June 1996, Frank Marcucio, executive director of the Seymour (Connecticut) Volunteer Ambulance Association, returned home from a Moving Kids Safely conference with an armful of Safe Communities materials. The same day, a Seymour high school senior died after falling from the roof of an automobile while "car surfing." This was the latest in an eight-year string of deaths among Seymour's high school graduating classes, which students refer to as the "senior curse." Armed with a high-profile *New York Times* article about the "curse" and a recent study revealing that the fatality rate from unintentional injuries in the six towns of the Lower Naugatuck Valley was 25 percent higher than in the rest of the state, Marcucio, with colleagues and partners, founded the Safe Communities Program of the Lower Naugatuck Valley.

The Safe Communities Program of the Lower Naugatuck Valley is a paradigm of how a Safe Communities program can become financially self-sustaining. Marcucio and his partners convinced the state health department to allow EMS agencies (who charge for their services) to include injury prevention activities as an expense when setting their rates. Marcucio describes the group's next steps:

We applied to the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven for a grant to turn our part-time deputy director position into a full-time position that included coordinating injury prevention activities. We applied for a three-year grant for decreasing amounts of money. Over that period, we were able to gradually raise our

Ending the "Senior Curse"

(continued from page 1)

rates and contribute a larger share of funds to the coordinator's position. The first year, we received \$30,000 from the foundation and contributed \$10,000. The second year, we matched them \$20,000 to \$20,000. This year, we received \$10,000 and contributed \$30,000. And next year, we will be fully self-supporting.



The gradual rise in charges will allow the ambulance service to fully fund the coordinator's position without placing an undue burden on its customers. The Safe Communities Program also seeks local grants and corporate donations to

support its activities, which have included bicycle safety programs, prom night mock crashes, and car seat clinics, as well as the distribution of more than 10,000 back-to-school pedestrian and school bus safety flyers. The program's efforts have contributed to an increase in the proportion of high school students wearing seat belts, from 17 percent to 60 percent.

The Safe Communities Program of the Lower Naugatuck Valley also erected life jacket loaner stations along the Naugatuck and Housatonic Rivers, taught CPR and first aid to more than 800 middle school students, sponsored a gunlock distribution program, and organized a regional Safety Summit. Several projects, including playground and school bus stop safety inspections, were initiated after community members came to the Safe Communities Program with their concerns.

The partners involved in the Safe Communities Program of the Lower Naugatuck Valley include local fire, police, and school departments; parent-teacher associations; health departments; hospitals; newspapers; businesses; the Connecticut SAFE KIDS Coalition; the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association; other EMS agencies; the Coast Guard; and the state police. The program was also instrumental in creating the Valley-Amity Chapter of the Connecticut SAFE KIDS Coalition, which will allow the Safe Communities program to expand its partnerships and activities beyond the Lower Naugatuck Valley.

Marcucio is upbeat about the ability of other communities to create similar programs. He points out, "There are plenty of volunteer EMS agencies who could use this model. They are always assisting people who are injured. Injury prevention completes the circle of services that EMS agencies should provide." ■

For more information about the Safe Communities Program of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, contact Frank Marcucio, Seymour Volunteer Ambulance Association, P.O. Box 223, Seymour, CT 06483. Telephone: (203) 888-8843; fax: (203) 881-5018.

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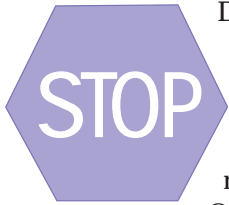
International Safe Communities Transportation Safety Partnership

Award

The first International Safe Communities Transportation Safety Partnership Award will be conferred at the Fifth World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control, held in New Delhi in March 2000. This award will recognize accomplishments of a local program in the field of unintentional transportation injury prevention. The award program is managed by an international committee of injury control and prevention experts. As one of the program's sponsors, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will collect and screen nominations. ■

For more information about the award, contact the Safe Communities Service Center. Telephone: (817) 978-3653; e-mail <Safe.Communities@nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Enhancing School Bus Safety



Despite the fact that all 50 states require vehicles to stop for a school bus that is loading or unloading, substantial numbers of motorists ignore the flashing red lights and extended stop arms.

One study revealed that, on a typical school day in Florida, nearly 10,600 vehicles illegally pass school buses. Projects around the country are demonstrating that combining intensive enforcement of passing (or “stop arm”) laws with public education can effectively address this problem. Such programs are necessarily collaborative, often involving school departments, law enforcement agencies, the media, and parent groups. Activities to reduce the illegal passing of school buses are another demonstration of the value of including law enforcement agencies in Safe Communities programs.

High-Profile Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies use several strategies to protect children on their bus trips to and from school. The Clearwater (Florida) Police Department uses school bus driver reports to identify areas with high levels of illegal passing. The department targets these areas for intensive enforcement of stop-arm laws and high-profile speed enforcement, since excessive speed often contributes to failure to stop for a bus. The department also conducts a public education campaign reminding drivers of their obligation to stop for school buses and the consequences of violating the laws. In addition to being featured in public service announcements, the “Stop for Red or Stop for Blue, School Bus Safety Is Up to You” message appears on bookmarks that are distributed at libraries and handed to car-wash patrons with their receipts. The slogan also appears on coffee mugs used as rewards for school bus drivers who report violations. Program Coordinator Sgt. Steve Burch says, “Pamphlets get thrown away. It is better to put your message on something that people reuse.”

Driver Checklists

Another model is being used in North Carolina. Using data collected at North Carolina’s annual one-day count of stop-arm violations, the Department of Public

Instruction (DPI) selected New Hanover and Onslow Counties (which have higher than average numbers of violations) and Pendar County (which sits between the two) as the sites of a NHTSA-funded project. DPI, in conjunction with law enforcement agencies, the district attorney’s office, and the Department of Motor Vehicles, developed a simple checklist for bus drivers to use in determining if a driver committed a prosecutable stop-arm violation. School bus drivers used this checklist to conduct a four-week survey of these violations. By combining this data with a computerized map of bus routes, Jeff Tsai of the Institute for Transportation



at North Carolina State (which coordinated the effort) mapped the bus routes with the highest number of violations. These routes were targeted for intensive enforcement—an effort that received a great deal of media attention.

Video Surveillance

Tsai also reports, “We took one of the video cameras used to monitor discipline inside the bus, mounted it on the outside of a bus underneath the stop arm, and combined it with sensors that show when the amber lights go on, when the red lights go on, and when the bus stops. This system showed us that the bus was being illegally passed two or three times every day. That got law enforcement’s attention.” In addition to demonstrating the seriousness of this problem to law enforcement officers, the camera provided compelling evidence against drivers caught on film. Jeff Smith, school transportation director for Onslow County, explains, “The camera records the people passing the bus. It records when the amber lights come on and when

the red lights come on. It notes the date and time and how fast the bus is going. When the drivers turn in a violation, I can make sure the bus is stopped and that the red lights are flashing. I report this to the highway patrol, and they cite the driver. If drivers claim that they weren't using their cars on that day, they get called down to the highway patrol office to view the film. Most of those who are captured on videotape plead guilty without going to court."

Operation Safe Stop

Northern states are also involved in this issue. New York State's Operation Safe Stop is an annual enforcement day involving all 62 New York counties and more than 250 police departments each fall. Program Coordinator Bob Peters reports that the 1998 event "made almost every TV station in the state." Local coordinators encouraged reporters to conduct "ride-alongs" on school buses or with police officers involved in the enforcement effort. In 1998, almost 1,600 illegal passing tickets and more than 1,700 citations for other violations were given out. In addition to the fall event, Operation Safe Stop conducts public education throughout the year and a "media blitz" in the spring. ■

Further information on school bus passing programs, including the NHTSA demonstration projects in North Carolina and Florida, can be obtained from Diane Wigle, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW, NTS-15, Room 5130, Washington, DC 20590. Telephone: (202) 266-4301; e-mail: <diane.wigle@nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Beyond the Ticket: Traffic Safety and Law Enforcement

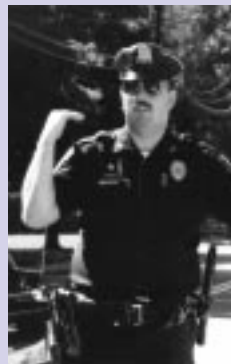
Partnering with law enforcement agencies can help Safe Communities programs prevent traffic injuries while also protecting their communities from crime (and injuries resulting from criminal activities). Several NHTSA-funded projects have shown that traffic enforcement and crime enforcement can be combined in ways that are both cost-effective and popular with the community.

Over a two-year period, the Georgia Department of Public Safety's "Operation Strap-'N'-Snap" conducted 10 safety belt enforcement periods. These efforts increased safety belt use from 51 percent to 74 percent and led to the arrest of 19,000 uninsured motorists and 1,500 fugitives. In addition, 2,000 drug arrests were made, 334 stolen vehicles were recovered, and more than 1,200 other felons were arrested. The fugitives arrested during this program outnumbered those arrested during other fugitive-apprehension operations.

During 1994 and 1995, the Tennessee Highway Patrol conducted 882 highly publicized impaired driving checkpoints. In addition to impaired driving arrests, 4 stolen vehicles were recovered; 49 weapons were seized; 35 felony arrests were made for offenses including drug possession, bootlegging, and parole violations; and officers arrested 201 individuals for misdemeanor drug violations.

In Modesto, California, police officers and private citizens formed Citizens for Safe Driving (CSD).

Originally concerned with impaired driving, the group has expanded to encompass a broad range of traffic safety issues, including seat belt use, child safety seat use, and speeding. The CSD supports police department enforcement efforts with



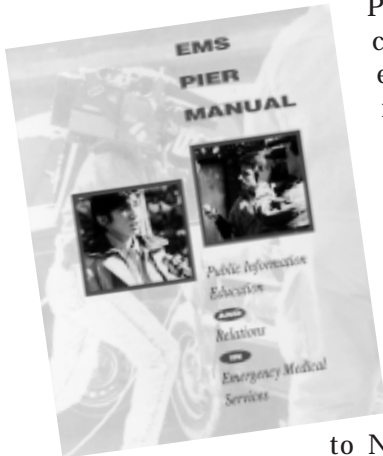
public information campaigns, including posters and brochures, television and radio public service announcements, a speakers bureau, messages printed on grocery bags, inserts in utility bills, a poster contest, and special cable broadcasts. CSD staged a "mock checkpoint" to publicize

the sobriety checkpoints and conducted public demonstrations of the police department's new laser speed gun. The effort paid off. From 1993 to 1994, the number of speed-related crashes in the city declined by 11 percent. Over the same period, there was an 8-percent decline in serious crimes like murder and rape and an 11-percent reduction in larceny and theft. ■

Combining crime prevention and traffic safety activities can be of tremendous benefit to the community and enhances the effectiveness of both law enforcement agencies and Safe Communities coalitions. For additional information and resources about integrating traffic enforcement and criminal enforcement activities in the context of a Safe Communities program, contact James Onder, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW, NTS-13, Room 5130, Washington, DC 20590. Telephone: (202) 266-4301; e-mail: <james.onder@nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Photograph courtesy of the Norwich Bulletin

Public Information, Education, and Relations



Public information, education, and relations are all essential to Safe Communities coalitions. Programs need to get safety messages out to the public and work with local media to publicize their activities. However, many Safe Communities coalition members have limited experience with public relations. Thanks

to NHTSA's PIER (Public

Information, Education, and Relations) program,

EMS agencies across the nation are developing expertise in these areas—expertise that can be of immense benefit to Safe Communities efforts.

PIER teaches EMS personnel to do the following:

- Communicate with the media and the public at the scene of an emergency and respond to questions about emergencies after the event
- Educate the public about injury prevention and the EMS system
- Help the public and decision makers understand the resources needed for an effective EMS system

NHTSA has developed workshops and publications that assist EMS agencies (and their Safe Communities

partners) in creating their own PIER programs. Other workshops train state agency personnel to furnish PIER technical assistance to local service providers. The *EMS PIER Manual* describes how to create and fund a PIER program, work with the media, educate the public, and build coalitions. A revised manual, available next year, will discuss working with Safe Communities coalitions. Other resources include *The PIER Network*, a quarterly newsletter, and the *SAFE (Safety Advice From EMS) Manual*, which contains detailed guidance on educating the public about injury prevention.

PIER is an important tool for community outreach. In South Carolina, the EMS Advisory Council PIER Committee organized a convoy of EMS vehicles from the “Mountains to the Sea.” Press conferences held along the route allowed EMS personnel and motor vehicle crash survivors to talk about the importance of using seat belts. The PIER Committee also created a television public service announcement on drowning prevention that reached more than a million people and is involved in public education about heat-related medical problems. George Rice, manager of information and education for Richland County Emergency Services, says, “The more people know how to take care of themselves, the less they need to call us for service.” ■

For information on PIER, contact Debra Kilpatrick. Telephone: (202) 366-5440; fax: (202) 366-7721; e-mail: <Debra.Kilpatrick@nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Resources

Aggressive Driving: Strategies for Aggressive Driver Enforcement discusses the problem of aggressive driving, describes activities designed to remove aggressive drivers from the roads, and includes a chapter on using the media to educate the community about this behavior.

Guidelines for Developing a Municipal Speed Enforcement Program provides guidance for developing traffic safety support committees and implementing speed enforcement and other traffic safety programs.

The *Highway Safety Desk Book* is a compendium on traffic law enforcement, including sections on abbreviations and acronyms; community-oriented policing; enforcement policies, personnel alloca-

tion, deployment, and evaluation; alcohol and drugs; speed enforcement; collision investigation; commercial vehicle and hazardous materials regulation; the licensing system; occupant protection; registration, title, and inspection enforcement; roadway management through engineering and enforcement; pedestrian safety; public information and education; uniformity, reciprocity, and Federal programs; and legal issues.

Looking Beyond the Ticket: Traffic Law Enforcement and Beyond discusses how officers who “look beyond the ticket” for other illegal behaviors during roadside traffic stops can have an impact on crime.

Saturation Patrols Targeting Impaired Driving for County Police describes the development, implementation, and management of saturation patrols, especially those emphasizing the detection of impaired drivers.

EMS Agenda for the Future outlines important new directions for EMS systems. The companion *Implementation Guide* provides specific guidance for EMS agencies on fulfilling the Agenda's goals.

These resources can be ordered from NHTSA Media and Marketing Division, 400 Seventh Street, SW, NTS-21, Washington, DC 20590. Additional resources can be found, downloaded, or ordered from the NHTSA website at <www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.

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Safe Communities Calendar

September 3-6, 1999: *Back to School/Child Passenger Safety Weekend*

September 16-19, 1999: *Mothers Against Drunk Driving's (MADD) 1999 National Conference*. For information, call Wilma L. Peterson at (214) 744-6233, ext. 224.

October 4-8, 1999: *National Walk Our Children to School Week*

October 6, 1999: *National Walk Our Children to School Day*

October 17-22, 1999: *New Orleans National Safety Council Annual Congress*. For information, call (800) 621-7619.

November 22, 1999: *Buckle Up America* and *Operation ABC Mobilizations*

December 1999: *National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3-D) Prevention Month*

December 17-19, 1999: *National Holiday Lifesavers Weekend* and *Impaired Driving Mobilization*

Safe Communities



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NHTSA maintains a database of Safe Communities programs.

If you have not registered your program with NHTSA, please contact:

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NHTSA Region VI-Room 8A38

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Fort Worth, TX 76102

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