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U.S. DOT/NHTSA Announce Partnership with Ford Motor Company to Give Away One Million Booster Seats

by Cathy Hickey,
Office of Public and Consumer Affairs

April 19, 2000. New York, New York. NHTSA Acting Administrator Rosalyn G. Millman joined Ford Motor Company President and CEO Jac Nasser to announce the "Boost America!" campaign to educate parents and children on the importance of booster seat use. Booster seats should be used by children 40 to 80 pounds (roughly 4 to 8 years-old). They are too small to fit properly in adult seat belts. In addition to the educational component, the campaign will distribute one million booster seats.

The announcement occurred at the New York International Auto Show in New York City. Other participants in the news conference included Jim Hall, Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, and Autumn Alexander Skeen of Yakima, Washington. Skeen's son died when he was ejected in a crash, even though he was wearing a seat belt. Skeen led the effort to make Washington the first state in the nation to require children to ride in booster seats.

Booster seats elevate children so that the adult seat belt fits them properly. Without a booster seat, the lap belt can ride up over the child's abdomen and cause serious internal injuries in a crash. Children in poorly fitting adult seat belts also risk being ejected from the vehicle altogether in the event of a crash.

According to NHTSA, 20 million children ages 4 to 8 are at risk of being injured or killed in a car crash. In 1998 alone, 527 children ages 4 through 8 died in automobile crashes. More than half (281) were completely unrestrained.

"Booster seat use is far too low in this country by children that should be using them," said NHTSA Acting Administrator

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Pictured from left to right: NHTSA Acting Administrator Rosalyn Millman; NTSB Chairman Jim Hall; Jim O'Connor, President-Ford Division, Ford Motor Company; Autumn Alexander Skeen; and Jac Nasser, President and CEO, Ford Motor Company.

Traffic Fatality Rate Hits All-Time Low in 1999

By Rae Tyson,
Office of Public and Consumer Affairs

Don't ever doubt that you are making a difference. For the third consecutive year, the traffic fatality rate hit all-time low in 1999. Give yourselves a pat on the back.

"This continued reduction in traffic fatalities is encouraging news," Secretary Rodney E. Slater said when he announced the

news in early April. Indeed, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles (VMT) was 1.5, down from 1.6 in 1998 and dramatically lower than the 5.5 rate in 1966. The 1999 figure represented the third successive year of historic improvement in the highway death rate. The total number of people killed was down slightly from 41,471 in 1998 to 41,345 in 1999, according to NHTSA's preliminary

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NHTSA in India for 5th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control

by Joan Harris, Office of the Administrator

Four representatives from the agency participated in the 5th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control, held in New Delhi, India in early March. Maria Vegega, Joan Tetrault, Joan Harris and Joseph Kianthra attended the conference, whose theme this year was "Building Partnerships for Safety Promotion and Accident Prevention."

The meeting attracted about 700 participants from around the world in academia, government, manufacturers, safety organizations, public health, the insurance industry, and practitioners in the field of injury prevention. NHTSA participants presented papers and participated in sessions covering Safe Communities, biomechanics, injury surveillance, alcohol, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and many other issues instrumental to the agency's mission.

The agency also sponsored the first ever International Safe Communities: Traffic Safety Partnership Award, which was presented during the conference. An international team of reviewers from the Netherlands, Sweden,



Submitted by Joan Harris, Office of the Administrator

Joe Kianthra, Director of NHTSA's Office of Vehicle Safety Research, presents the International Safe Communities — Traffic Safety Partnership Award, to (from left to right) Wendee Cloutier of the Derry, New Hampshire Community Alliance for Teen Safety; Dr. Borge Ytterstad of the Harstad Injury Prevention Program in Norway; and Jerry Moller of the Millicent Road Safety Programme of South Australia. The awards were presented at the 5th World Injury Conference in New Delhi.

Australia and NHTSA's Acting Administrator Rosalyn Millman reviewed applications and selected 4 to receive this prestigious designation.

Joseph Kianthra, from the Office of Vehicle Safety Research, presented the award on behalf of Ms. Millman. ■

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Rosalyn G. Millman. In fact, according to NHTSA surveys, fewer than 7 percent of those kids who need a boost, get one.

"Even the most safety-conscious parents are often unaware of the need for booster seats or the danger their children face when improperly restrained in an adult safety belt," Millman said. "As children grow, their restraint needs for maximum protection change."

Because most state laws only require child safety seat use up to age three or four, many parents incorrectly assume older kids are safe in just a seat belt. In addition, while child safety seats and child safety seat displays have been readily found in retail stores for years, until recently booster seats were not marketed as widely.

In addition to Ford and NHTSA, other

partners who have signed on to date include: AAA; American Trauma Society; Emergency Nurses CARE; International Association of Chiefs of Police; National Association of

Governors' Highway Safety Representatives; National Association of Police Organizations; National Association of School Resource Officers; and the National Fire Protection Association.

A significant component of the "Boost America!" campaign includes providing 500,000 free booster seats for

families that cannot afford to buy one. NHTSA will assist Ford in setting up programs to reach those in need. In addition, a voucher system will be developed for Ford customers. Family vehicles such as the Ford Windstar and Taurus will help lead the way, but the voucher program will include other

Ford brand vehicles as well.

A joint brochure will be widely distributed to various outlets, including all 154,000 elementary schools and day care centers in the country. A Web site (www.boostamerica.org) is also available. ■

Awards and Announcements

Ms. Esther Wagner of the Office of Research and Traffic Records, NTS-30, received an award for her work on the technical report and poster titled "Intersection Negotiation Problems of Older Drivers." The topic was delivered at the 5th World conference on Injury Prevention and Control in New Delhi, India held March 5-8, 2000.

Ms. Amy Matush, Traffic Safety Programs Intern for NTS-10, working on pedestrian, bicycle, motorcycle and school bus safety programs, was accepted to the Presidential Management Intern (PMI) program. The PMI program will enable Ms. Matush to continue her work in the federal sector and on a variety of program issues. Ms. Matush will receive her Masters Degree in Community Health Education from West Virginia University in May 2000. ■



NHTSA/Ad Council New Seat Belt Campaign Depicting Real-World Crashes Wins Two Major Industry Awards

The 29th annual Mobius Advertising Awards were presented on February 9, 2000, at the Chicago Cultural Center and Museum of Broadcast Communications, Chicago, Illinois. Marking the competition's second largest year in its history, a total of 271 Mobius statuettes

were presented to winners in various categories, including television, radio and package design. A First Place Mobius Statuette was awarded for the :30 television spot titled "Cruisin'", in the Public Service Announcements category.

The EFFIE award, sponsored by the NY American Marketing Association is the only national award that honors creative achievement in meeting and exceeding advertising objectives — recognizing the effectiveness of advertising that works in the marketplace. The Safety Belt campaign will be honored on June 7, 2000 at the awards gala in New York City, where a gold, silver or bronze trophy will be presented to the advertising agency that created the campaign, Leo Burnett/Chicago. ■ (Watch this space for a full report in an upcoming issue of NHTSA Now).

"CRUISIN'" :30 CNTD-9330



PASSENGER GUY: No batteries in the flashlight. **DRIVER GUY:** Okay, you know what? **BACKSEAT GIRL:** See that guy? Look. **PASSENGER GUY:** Okay, girls at 3 o'clock. **BACKSEAT GIRL:** What is he looking at? **PASSENGER GIRL:** He's looking at us, what do you think?



PASSENGER GUY: Oh, don't — it's so obvious. Captain Obvious has scored again. **DRIVER GUY:** Open your window. Say something. **DRIVER GIRL:** Oh, he's rolling his window down. **GIRLS:** Hey, guys. **GUYS:** Hi.



(SFX: CRASH)

Traffic Fatality Rate Hits All-Time Low in 1999

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1999 Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) assessment.

But the preliminary numbers also showed progress in specific areas:

- The number of alcohol-related fatalities — 15,794 — also dropped slightly in 1999 from 15,934 deaths in 1998.
- The number of pedestrians killed fell 10 percent from 5,220 in 1998 to 4,695 in 1999.
- The number of passenger vehicle occupant deaths of children under five dropped

slightly from 566 in 1998 to 543 in 1999.

- The number of people injured increased slightly from 3.19 million to 3.2 million.
- Fatalities involving large truck crashes dropped from 5,374 in 1998 to 5,203 in 1999.

Unfortunately, the 1999 FARS statistics served as a grim reminder about the importance of seat belts: 63 percent of those killed in crashes last year were unbuckled. An unrelated NHTSA survey found that seat belt use dropped slightly in 1999 to 67 percent from 70 percent in 1998. "We've been saying it for years and it's still true:

"Buckling up saves lives," said Acting NHTSA Administrator Rosalyn Millman.

Despite overall improvement, the 1999 FARS assessment pinpointed some specific trouble spots:

- Motorcycle crashes killed 2,537 in 1999 compared to 2,284 in 1998.
- Speeding-related traffic deaths rose from 12,477 in 1998 to 12,672 in 1999.

NHTSA annually collects crash statistics from 50 states and the District of Columbia to produce the annual report on traffic fatality trends. The final FARS report, including a more detailed analysis, will be completed early this summer. ■

Message to Mid America Truck Show: "We Want to Hear from You"

by Larry Long,
Office of Defects Investigation

March 23-25, 2000. Louisville, Kentucky
My objective for this show was to capture the attention of those people who, on a day to day basis, drive or maintain medium and heavy trucks. The purpose was twofold: First, I wanted to convey to these people that there is a safety agency that wants to hear from the trucking industry, namely the drivers, owners, and maintenance people concerning truck problems. And secondly, to introduce them to our hotline number, website and other sources of valuable information they may utilize.

I was told beforehand that my section "off the west wing" would be a relatively "slow traffic" area, and this show would attract primarily owner/operators. To the contrary, that turned out not to be the case and we (the volunteers from the University of Kentucky and me) were extremely busy throughout the 3-day show, with both parties accomplishing what they had intended to do.

Dr. Deborah Reed of the Agricultural Health & Prevention Department of the University of Kentucky, had hoped for approximately 275 completed surveys regarding medical services available to women truck drivers away from the home, and received 322. This also worked in my favor since the majority of those surveyed had their spouses with them, permitting

discussions with them on safety defects. Dr. Reed's group gave away travel bags as an incentive to filling out the survey and included ODI information (VOQ's, Service Recall Brochure, and Hotline insert) in each one.

It was clear from those I talked with that most, if not all, were unaware of ODI or for that

matter, of NHTSA. Yet those I talked to (owner/operators and their wives, fleet-safety managers, law enforcement inspectors, mechanics, advertising and marketing representatives) for the most part took the information positively and expressed an interest in calling us if they had a safety concern. Our booth handed out nearly a 1000 VOQ's and several hundred safety recall campaign brochures and portfolios. As Mr. David Jones, Vice President of Driver Services of Alpis, succinctly put it, "your booth was the best kept secret of the show." ■



ODI Goes Truckin'.....10-4

In 1998, the Office of Defects Investigations (ODI) received into their database approximately 21,000 alleged safety defect complaints via the Auto Safety Hotline, Internet, and Vehicle Owner Questionnaires. Of that number, only

seven complaints were received regarding large class 8 trucks (tractor trailers).

ODI recognized the need to develop and implement outreach programs to encourage owners/operators of commercial class vehicles and other small vehicle populations to respond as fervently and openly as automobile owners. ODI hired Larry Long, a contractor from Signal Corporation, with 21 years of experience in the automotive field to help ODI establish a clearinghouse for recall information, service bulletins, and ongoing investigations available to the trucking industry.

Long is currently involved with placing public service announcements in trade association, media and magazine publications. His PSA's have been on Road Star Radio News, The Bill Mack Trucking Show, and in

Landline Magazine, a publication put out by the Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA). ■



NHTSA's Campaign to Combat Drowsy Driving Wins DC ADDY Award

NHTSA's program to combat drowsy driving among shift workers, developed by Equals Three Communications in cooperation with TSP, won the "Addy" in the Regional/National Campaign category in the Public Service Division by the Advertising Club of Washington, DC. The Advertising Club of Washington, DC held its "2000 American Advertising Awards" ceremony on Saturday, April 1 at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center. ■

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Kathryn Henry
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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Vitality shows not only in the ability to persist, but in the ability to start over.

— F. Scott Fitzgerald