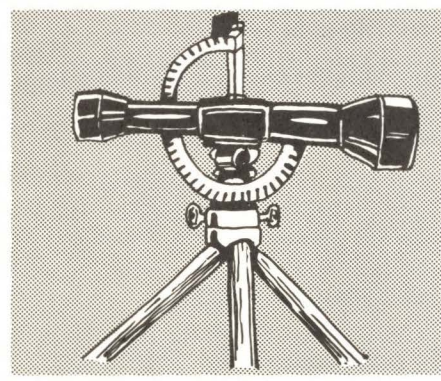


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NETWORK

National survey

This month NHTSA published the final report on its annual survey of public attitudes on highway safety. The survey was conducted under contract by a Washington, D.C. market research firm, Teknekron, Inc. In the survey, 1500 licensed drivers between the ages of 16 and 65 were contacted on the telephone for their views on four key highway safety issues—the 55 mph speed limit, safety belts, passive restraints, and drunk driving. The purpose of the survey was to measure existing support for highway safety programs and to discover ways to increase support for those programs.

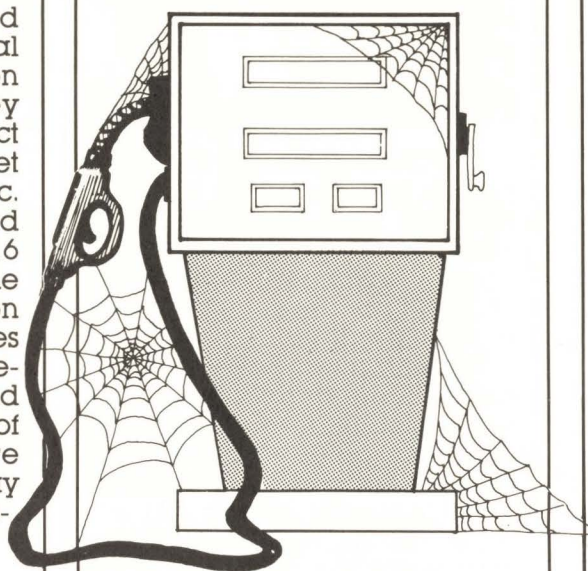


Some of the key findings of the survey:

- 1) 77 percent of the people favor keeping the 55 mph speed limit (55% strongly so).
- 2) The public seems to be in favor of stricter enforcement of the speed limit.
- 3) 73% of the people approve of the USDOT ruling which will require passive restraints to be installed in all cars sold in this country by 1984.
- 4) 70 percent of the people think that reducing drunk driving is the most effective way to reduce highway fatalities.
- 5) While people generally recognize the value of safety belts, they are very reluctant to wear them. The main objections are that belts are inconvenient, a bother, and easy to forget.

To get a copy of the full report on the survey, write NETWORK.

Gashogs—beware!



The 1979 gas mileage guide for new car buyers is out. The pocket-size guide contains basic information about fuel economy for new cars, station wagons, vans, and light trucks. It estimates their mile-per-gallon rating in tabular form for easy comparison.

The 1979 guide has only one mileage rating for each vehicle instead of three ratings—city, highway, and combined—as in the past. The new mpg ratings are equal to the old city ratings.

A free copy of the guide is available at local new car dealers or by writing Fuel Economy, Pueblo, CO 81009.

Bulk copies can be requested from Fuel Economy Distribution, Office of Alternative Services, Department of Energy, Washington, DC 20545.

Good and bad

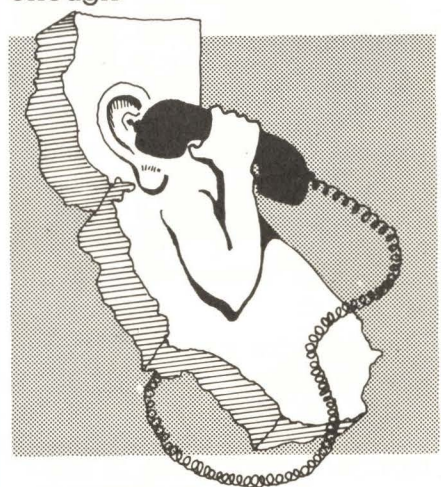
Last year, the California Office of Traffic Safety commissioned a survey of California drivers aimed at determining

their attitudes toward two critical highway safety issues—the 55 mph speed limit and safety belts.

The survey has some good news and some bad news. First, the good news. Californians understand and appreciate the benefits of 55 very well. Many seem willing to accept greater efforts at enforcing it in order to maintain those benefits.

Eighty-five percent say 55 has reduced crashes and deaths (30 percent say a lot). Sixty-four percent say 55 has made driving seem safer to them. Fifty-six percent say 55 has saved a "fairly significant" amount of gasoline in California.

And while 42 percent say that current enforcement of 55 by the California Highway Patrol is about right, only seven percent say it is too strict, and 47 percent say it isn't strict enough.



Now the bad news. In an early part of the survey, motorists were asked if they favored keeping the 55 mph limit or if they thought it ought to be changed. Sixty-one percent said keep it, 39 percent said change it.

But near the end of the questionnaire, they were asked the same question again. This

time, only 48 percent came out in favor of 55. The question was worded a bit differently the second time around.

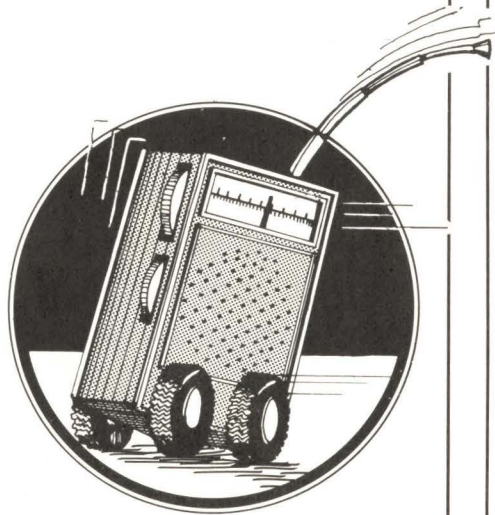
Respondents were given five options on what to do with the speed limit—keep it at 55, raise it to 60, raise it to 70, or get rid of it.

In this new scenario, 48 percent said keep it at 55, 23 percent said raise it to 60, 20 percent said go to 65, five percent said 70, and four percent said get rid of it.

While this shows 71 percent approval for a 60 mph speed limit or less, and only five percent approval for returning to the old speed limit of 70, it is clear that strenuous efforts will be necessary to maintain support for 55.

The survey also has information on safety belt usage and attitudes. For a copy of the survey summary, write NETWORK.

Tuning in radio



A booklet entitled "Radio: Get the Message," by Gary Marx, is published by the Radio Information Office of the National Association of Broadcasters. It was originally produced to help local school boards get more airtime, but it is useful to anyone desiring to use radio more effectively.

Radio is an important medium for highway safety messages. It often hits the listener while in the act of driving ("point of purchase," you might say). It also targets au-

diences according to listening tastes (bluegrass, hard rock, classical).

Radio production is certainly less expensive than television or motion pictures and may be more controllable in terms of getting airplay at desired times.

To receive a copy of "Get the Message," send \$1.00 to National Association of Broadcasters, Radio Information Office, 1771 N St. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

First class

NHTSA is developing a short course for state safety communicators. Scheduled for spring 1979, the four-and-a-half day course will cover managing public communications for highway safety.

Primary objectives are to: (1) assure an understanding of essential techniques in the management of public communications programs associated with highway safety; (2) enable public communications managers to participate in the development of the state's highway safety plan; and (3) help public communications managers to obtain and organize resources.

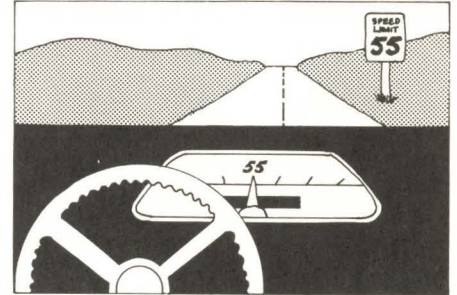
The short course will stress planning, management, and measuring the effects of public communications campaigns. Examples from state programs will be used along with input from qualified people in the areas of campaign planning, design, and audience research. Invitees to the course are to be identified by governor's highway safety representatives. Contacts are underway with potential participants to



ascertain the needs and interests of those expected to attend.

The course will be held at the Traffic Safety Institute in **Oklahoma City**. Because the number of participants will be kept small, the course may be offered twice a year.

55 fact book



The new edition of the popular 55 mph Fact Book is now available. Developed by NHTSA, the fact book answers questions on 55 for cars and trucks. A good resource for articles, fact sheets, news releases and speeches, the booklet includes figures on each state's compliance, death rate, highway travel, penalties and arrest figures.

To receive a copy, write: NHTSA, NAD-42, Washington, DC 20590.

“The median energy efficiency speed is 55 MPH. This has been determined by studying wind resistance and engine efficiency factors.”

“The Epilepsy Foundation of America recently issued a report that says, 'The 55 mph speed limit has proved to be the single most important preventive for new cases of epilepsy, because it has reduced the number of head trauma injuries resulting from automobile accidents.' The report estimated that the speed limit has prevented at least 90,000 epilepsy-causing injuries each year.”

“The probability of a fatality in a crash roughly doubles as traveling speed increases from 45 to 60 mph, and doubles again as speed increases to 70 mph.”

In the stacks of the DOT library lies a scrapbook of articles that someone in the Department of Public Works put together long ago on public speaking.

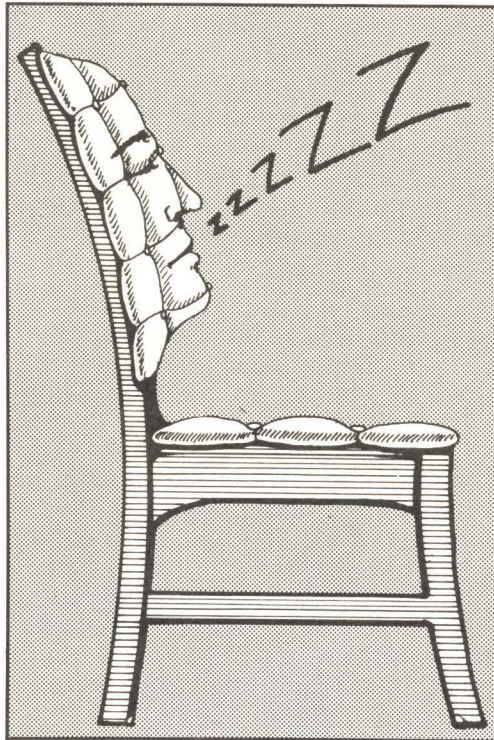
The writing is from the 1940's. Most of it is as valid today as it was 30 years ago.

The problem is not really the length of time (a speech lasts). The problem is the attempt on the part of the speaker to cover too much. Ninety five percent of a series of safety speeches which I once analyzed indicated that each speaker was trying to solve the whole safety problem in one speech.

A big, significant idea, given in each speech you give, developed with some degree of interestingness, is more than is accomplished by 85 percent of all speakers.

All this business of trying to give a speech which will sound and look like an article in **Harper's Magazine**, or something for the safety magazine, seems to belong to the 19th century. In fact, the more simple, the more kind of rough, grammati-

SPEAK EASY



cally, your speech turns out to be, the better from the point of view of communications this

speech is likely to be.

When you speak to a group, you need what the experts call audience contact. Ever notice how much more comfortable you feel when you stand in front of a group close to those in the front chairs? It's this urge to get closer to the listeners that causes a speaker to want to push the microphone out of the way, to walk to the front of a stage or even come down off the stage. The speaker senses that if he gets closer, he will do better. Usually he does.

In speaking to an audience of young people, one should make a greater effort than in speaking to adults. Adults will listen politely to a dull speaker; youngsters will not.

Never, never memorize a talk word for word. If you do, you're almost sure to forget it. And if you do forget it, your audience will probably be glad. Nobody wants to listen to a canned speech.

Always stop before your listeners want you to.

Drinking age blues

The Public Affairs Newsletter (September 1978) of Kemper Insurance Company reports an upward trend in the number of crashes involving teenage drivers and alcohol in states that have lowered the drinking age.

Many states are interested in



returning the legal drinking age to the pre-1970 levels. Only two states have actually done it—Iowa returned the legal drinking age to 19 in June of this year, and the voters of Michigan returned it to 21 in November. Additional information on the involvement of teenagers and alcohol can be obtained by writing: Public Relations D-1, Kemper Insurance and Financial Companies, Long Grove, Illinois 60049.

National, too

The NHTSA national survey of public attitudes on highway safety (see related story on page one) contained questions which tried to measure motorists' perceptions of accident risk. The purpose was to test a theory that those who think driving is a high risk activity are more likely to do things which will reduce their chances of being hurt is a

crash—things like drive 55, wear safety belts, and avoid drunk driving. If this is true, the corollary is that by using public communications campaigns which attempt to increase risk perception, we will be able to make drivers more willing to drive 55, wear safety belts, etc.

The survey results showed two things. First, drivers in general have an unrealistically low sense of their risk of being involved in an accident. Most thought their chances of being in a crash in the next year were from 1 in 100 to 1 in 1000, or less. (The real odds are about 1 in 5 for a property damage crash and 1 in 70 for a serious injury crash.) Second, the views and practices of those respondents with a relatively high sense of risk (compared to other respondents in the survey) were not significantly different from the views and practices of those with a relatively low sense of accident risk. The former were no more

likely to favor 55, seatbelts, or sober driving than the latter.

Measuring risk perception in a telephone survey is not easy. But assuming we asked the right questions, the results seem to indicate that we must be more specific in our appeals to the American driver. Generalized admonitions that driving is hazardous and that drivers should drive safely will not work. We must be able to offer concrete examples of the hazards drivers face and specific behaviors drivers can undertake to reduce those hazards.

New model

Ever consider the potential combinations of sources, messages, and media which can be used to reach critical audiences to promote 55 mph compliance?

Most possibilities are listed in NHTSA's "55 MPH Model Plan for Public Communications," just published.

The plan lists 23 audiences—from high-mileage drivers to business executives—and discusses appropriate themes and appeals for persuading them to support 55. The plan also describes possible media and channels for reaching each audience and recommends ways for measuring the effects of communications efforts to influence them.

The plan offers a sample request for proposal for use by

agencies intending to use private contractors to carry out 55 mph audience research.

NHTSA offers on-site assistance to state agencies in planning and designing their 55 mph public communications programs.

Copies of the 55 model plan are being distributed to Governors highway safety representatives through NHTSA regional offices. For an individual copy, write NETWORK.

Tool kit

Everyone has one indispensable book or device that helps him to do his job.

Sometimes it's homemade, such as a mailing list formula. Sometimes it's purchased (and maybe expensive), such as a no-holds-barred unabridged dictionary, or a comprehensive public relations manual. Sometimes it's free, such as a copy of the state's safety statistics.

They're all tools for getting the job done better.

What is your favorite PR aid? Tell NETWORK. We'll share your suggestions in an upcoming issue.



This is **NETWORK**: a monthly meeting place for sharing ideas among highway safety public communications professionals.

NETWORK covers the highlights. If

you want more, it tells you where to go.

Need help? Got some ideas? Working on a good campaign? We want to hear from you. Write **NETWORK**, NHTSA, NTS-10, Washington, DC 20590.

NETWORK is a publication of the Office of Driver and Pedestrian Programs, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

CARE 1979

The executive committee of Operation CARE met in November at **Indianapolis** to make plans for summer 1979 and to nominate a slate of officers to be voted on at the organization's annual meeting February 13-14, again in Indianapolis.

Memorial Day, July 4th, and Labor Day will be the focus of increased enforcement activities in 1979.

Operation CARE stands for Combined Accident Reduction Effort. It is an attempt to increase public awareness of enforcement activities across state lines.

Operation CARE affords an excellent opportunity for communicators to work with enforcement people and combine enforcement with public communications activities on 55.

States from **Maine** to **California** will be working together to enforce the 55 mph speed limit and cut the number of deaths and injuries along the Interstate system.

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