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Traffic Safety Section

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“55 FOR TEXAS”

A Grassroots Traffic Safety Campaign

“Hey Texas, Do your Share
Drive 55, Show you Care!”



Mark Goode (right), Engineer-Director of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation, and Jay Brim, chairman of the board of the Texas Jaycees, are shown at the State Capitol in Austin reviewing a special highway sign for use in the “55 for Texas”.

(AUSTIN) Colorful signs bearing traffic safety jingles greeted Texas motorists along major highways during the Fourth of July weekend.

The signs, inspired by the old rhyming Burma Shave ads of days gone by, are part of the unique “55 for Texas” campaign co-sponsored by several organizations and the State Department of Highways and

Public Transportation (SDHPT).

“We’re grateful for the members of the Texas Jaycees’ and REACT clubs in helping tell their hometown friends and neighbors about the real value of the 55 mph speed limit,” said Mark Goode, Engineer-Director of SDHPT. “This is an unprecedented kind of grassroots traffic safety effort. There’s nothing quite like it

anywhere else in the country.”

Eighty Jaycee chapters across Texas installed the signs at key highway locations during the Fourth of July weekend. REACT clubs, comprised of CB enthusiasts, monitored road conditions and provided radio stations across the state with up-dated road information.

The project, designed to publicize the merits of the

speed limit, which National Highway Traffic Safety officials credit with saving thousands of lives and billions of gallons of gasoline, will be repeated on Labor Day weekend.

In continuing their support of the 55 mph speed limit, Texas Jaycees are using specially prepared audio-visual materials for presentation to local community groups and civic clubs. SDHPT has also released a

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Texans Reduce Speeds, Retain Federal Funds

(AUSTIN) Texas has a chance to retain \$8 million in federal highway funds despite the lack of 55 mph compliance of drivers in the state.

Federal Highway Administration and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration representatives listened during the July hearing to state officials as they explained efforts taken to achieve compliance with the speed limit.

Last year Texas reported the highest average speed of any state with 69.7 percent of its drivers exceeding the speed limit.

Texans have slowed their driving speeds. In 1978, 80 percent of the drivers exceeded the speed limit. Figures released in March, 1980 indicate that 63 percent currently exceed the limit.

“I’ve seen some good things,” David Oliver, a federal official said, “I think its a fair assumption that Texas won’t lose any of its highway funds.”

State Planning Engineer, Transportation, Phillip Wilson attributes this reduction to stepped-up enforcement and higher fuel prices.

Department of Public Safety Director James Adams credits the reduction to a vigorous highway patrol campaign. The campaign, which used unmarked cars, resulted in an 18 percent increase in speeding tickets in the first four months of 1980.

“We are directing our efforts to law enforcement,” he said.

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The current Appropriations Act (Article V, Section 66c, H.B. 558, 66th Legislature, 1979) requires all state newsletters and other periodicals to present a notice in three consecutive issues indicating “that anyone desiring to continue to receive the publication must so indicate in writing. The agency shall furnish future publications only to those persons requesting.”

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Child Restraint Promotion Rewards Parents

**Story by:
Cyndy Slovak
Waco-Tribune Herald**

(WACO)—The parents of Waco children who "care enough" to make their child use an approved, crash-tested safety seat were rewarded during July as part of an incentive program to encourage restraint use.

Hank Syrkin, former Coordinator of the Traffic Safety and Education Program at McLennan Community College, said he and his assistant, Donna Underwood, looked into cars in the Waco area and took the license plate number of those that had child safety seats in them. The numbers were printed in the *Tribune-Herald* and winners picked up their

prizes at a safety seat promotional display in a Waco shopping mall. "Everyone's a winner this way," Syrkin said, "even the kids."

The leading cause of death to children under 5 years of age in the United States is careless accidents. Approximately 91 percent of the 1,000 killed each year could have been saved and 78 percent of the 80,000 injuries to children could have been prevented if the children had been using safety seats.

"Our main objective is to get across to parents that without a restraining device, children don't have much of a chance in accidents," said Syrkin.

A safety seat is a safety device not only because it protects the child, but it also keeps the child from breaking the attention of the driver, Syrkin said. "Many mothers say the seats are too much trouble. But actually it helps because she doesn't have to worry about the child."

Syrkin stated that the seats may be a little bit of trouble at the beginning, but soon the child will get used to the idea and will not think anything about using the seat. "Parents have to think enough of their children to make them use the seats. A small child can't get into the seat himself. He needs the parents," Syrkin said.

A good example set by parents will also make the child think about these safety measures. "If a child sees a parent using seat belts, then he will grow accustomed to using the safety seats," Syrkin said. "But unfortunately, only 12 percent of the adult population in the United States wear seat belts."

Syrkin, who has been in the traffic safety business 16 years, said that the injuries to children are more long-term than most people realize.

"Just a quick stop can make a child hit his head against the dashboard, windshield or hard seat back," Syrkin said. "A large number of people who receive head injuries develop epilepsy."

Safety restraints are really a must for all children, Syrkin said. "You can't think of this as the amount of time it takes to put a child into them. Think of it in terms of how long it takes you to drive to the hospital to see your child after he's been in a wreck."

Remember, Stay Alert!

The most significant cause of motor-vehicle fatalities, serious injuries and property damage is the two-car crash, says the National Safety Council.

In any traffic situation, the Council warns the motorist, there are six possibilities of a "two car crash":

1. With the car ahead
2. With the car following
3. With the car approaching
4. With a car entering an intersection
5. With the car passing the motorist, and
6. With the car that the motorist overtakes and passes.

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all-American.

Driver's Desiderata

Editors note: Borrowed from Desiderata, found in St. Pauls Church, Baltimore, 1692.

Go 55 amid the noise and haste of the expressway and remember what safety there may be in the seat belt. As far as possible without surrender, yield to all motorists. Seek your right-of-way quietly and clearly; and listen for the horns of others, even the small and ignorant; they too have rights-of-way.

Avoid loud and aggressive drivers, they are on their way to accidents. If you speed and compete with others, you may become fined and bitter; for always there will be faster and slower drivers than yourself, including the police. Enjoy your legal speed as well as your plans for gasoline tomorrow.

Keep interested in your own machine, however dull it may seem; it is a real possession in the changing times. Exercise caution in your maintenance, for the world is full of shady mechanics. But let this not blind you to those who have virtue; many mechanics strive for better performance; and everywhere there are mileage stretchers.

Be yourself. Especially, do not leave behind a possible car-pooler. Neither be cynical about the local gas station, for in the face of all adversity and disen-

chantment it is your source of fuel.

Take kindly the speed of the aged, gracefully surrendering your youth. Extend every ounce of fuel to shield us all from sudden shortages. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born at the first sign of a long line. Beyond a wholesome attempt to cut back trips, be gentle on the gas pedal.

You are a licensed driver, no less than the professional trucker and richman; you have a right to a gallon here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the energy crisis will continue to unfold as it should.

Therefore be at peace with the Government, the oil companies, and your fellow motorists, and whatever the cost per gallon (or liter), keep calm in the noisy confusion of life in the gas line.

With all its sham, dullness and broken limits, 55 is still a beautiful world. Without it, vehicles may not move at all someday. Be careful.

Reprinted from Driver magazine, a U.S. Air Force publication.



Mary Londos of Waco uses safety seat without help.
Photo by John Bennett



Jill and Mrs. Joe Hall of Waco prepare to ride in the car.
Photo by John Bennett

Rail Crossing Accidents: Failure to be Cautious

By: Janet King
Texas Safety Association

More than 1,000 car-train accidents occurred in Texas last year causing 71 deaths and 638 injuries.

Failure of motorists to exercise caution and accept individual responsibility for their own safety was the primary cause of those accidents.

In a recent report from the National Transportation Safety Board, Chairman Jim King said, "Rail-highway crossing fatalities last year were down 17.5 percent, and state-by-state totals indicate the primary factor may be the spread and impact of statewide 'Operation Lifesaver' programs attacking this specific problem area." Operation Lifesaver, inaugurated in Texas in 1977 by the Railroad Section of the Texas Safety Association, is a nationwide public education program aimed at reducing grade crossing accidents.

Each of Texas' 14,700 public grade crossings, the highest number in the nation, is equipped with one or more of the "Lifesaver" signs--the octagonal stop sign, the X-shaped crossbuck, the yellow and black advance warning sign, flashing lights, bells and/or automatic gates--yet one-half of all grade crossing collisions are caused by drivers who ignore the mechanical warning devices.

Tom Murphy, state chairman of Operation Lifesaver, believes

that although the railroad plays a significant part in the program, Operation Lifesaver is not strictly a railroad program.

"Grade crossing safety is a public problem, a community problem. The Operation Lifesaver program needs involvement at all levels for ut-



most effectiveness: railroads, state and local government, law enforcement, industry, news media and the general public."

Operation Lifesaver urges all motorists to be aware of the most common causes of grade crossing accidents and know how to avoid them:

1. Impatient driver races train to crossing, misjudging train's speed. A freight train going 50 mph needs over a mile and a half to stop.

Motorists should always stop and wait for a train to pass.

2. Driver ignores warning signs, often driving through flashing lights or around lowered gates. *Motorists should be alert for these signs and always slow down when approaching a grade crossing.*

3. Driver is stopped at a multiple track crossing. As the train passes, driver starts across tracks without checking for trains on adjacent tracks. *Motorists should not proceed across tracks until visibility is good and flashing lights have stopped.*

4. Drivers who cross the same tracks every day become too familiar with train scheduling and are not cautious at crossings. Nearly all grade crossing accidents occur within 25 miles of the driver's home. *Motorists should approach every crossing as if a train were coming.*

5. Driver overdrives car's headlights and does not slow down at night or in bad weather. *Motorists should be especially alert at night and in bad weather and be able to stop within the distance illuminated by their headlights.*

by members of the Capitol Press Corps in Austin.

First prize is to be a free trip to Six Flags Over Texas for the winning student and three members of his or her family. This will include airline tickets, hotel accommodations, meals and park passes. Prizes for other finalists will include calculators, watches, special plaques and certificates.

asked to submit a 300-word editorial explaining the life-saving and energy-conserving advantages of 55 mph. Contestant entries will be judged locally by high school language arts and journalism teachers, and regionally by members of the Texas Joint Council of Teachers of English and the Texas Journalism Directors. The final entries will be judged

COAHOMA — All signs purchased under the SDHPT Sign Replacement Program have been installed and await FWHHA approval.

GRAND SALINE — One police supervisor will attend the Police Administration Training Program at Northwestern University Traffic Institute in Illinois, through funds provided by the Traffic Safety Section of SDHPT.

COLLEGE STATION — Texas A & M University has revised and distributed over 3,500 copies of a curriculum for drivers education.

GREENVILLE — Construction barricade, sign standards and practices will be upgraded through funds provided by the Traffic Safety Section of SDHPT.

Traffic Safety Education Texas-Style

By: Susan Bryant

This is the first in a three part series on the multi-faceted Texas Traffic Safety education program.

Mazes that will amaze you. Puppets to please you. And drawings that will delight you. Those sound more like the ad to a Barnum and Bailey Circus than the ingredients of a traffic safety program. But puppets, cartoons, and flashcards are essential pieces to a big puzzle that create the whole traffic safety information and education picture in Texas, a program that has to be as big as the state itself.

All too often safety is a boring list of do's and don'ts that people, adults and children alike, react to negatively. Safety is something you "have to" do; and, as everyone knows, is certainly no fun. But Texas is trying to change that myth and has sponsored several projects, particularly at the elementary grade school level, which support the idea that learning safety can be enjoyable, if the right medium is used.

The Texas public information and education program in traffic safety, as conducted through the Traffic Safety Section of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation, is divided into special subject areas (bicycle and pedestrian safety, safety restraints, motorcycle safety, drinking and driving, and speeding), into particular target groups (especially lower elementary grade school students, driver education

students, young adults, "average" drivers, and the elderly), and, unlike many smaller states, also into particular geographical regions (the Rio Grande Valley with its high concentration of Mexican-Americans; the highly urban areas of Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio; the great, open flatlands of the western plains; the coastline with its great influx of tourists during the winter; and the bayou, timber country in the east). The traffic safety program needs to be as diverse as are the problems, the people and the regions.

The philosophy which guides the program in traffic safety education is that a continuous and consecutive program is needed to not only teach information and skills that should be developed at an early age, but also to reinforce attitudes and behaviors.

To do this, there are several programs provided on request from the Traffic Safety Section directly to all students, including those in private as well as public schools, and in church groups and youth organizations such as 4-H and scouting. These programs, which reach children between the ages of five and twelve, include a coloring book; a book of activities; a puppet safety theater complete with filmstrips, scripts, theater and

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"55" EDITORIAL CONTEST

Texas high school students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills this fall through a contest sponsored by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT).

The Traffic Safety Section of SDHPT will be conducting a "55 for Texas" high school editorial contest. Junior and senior class students will be

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series of radio and TV commercials which will sell the virtues of 55 mph.

The 55 mph campaign, the creative achievement of Canson & Associates, an Austin based consulting firm, includes a support program for industry. With the cooperation of the Texas Safety Association, companies throughout the state are being provided with 55 mph information for distribution to

employees.

"The support for the 55 mph campaign from the Jaycees, REACT clubs, state industry, and local communities has been tremendously encouraging," said John Staha, SDHPT Administrator of the Traffic Safety Program. "The importance of enforcement cannot be denied, but it will be those people who voluntarily slow down who will be the primary

cause of reduced gasoline consumption and lowered fatality rates."

The Texas highway death rate fell 15-20 percent after 55 mph became the speed limit. Research shows that the chance of surviving a wreck at 70 mph are only 50/50. But the odds of survival improve tremendously (to 30-1) at 55. In addition, the 55 mph limit gives drivers more time to avoid collisions.



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"In December, we had 33 percent compliance with the speed limit. By March 1, it was 37 percent."

Adams attributed much of the problem to Texas' size and its vast highway miles.

Texas has undertaken efforts

in the private sector to engage compliance with the 55 mph speed limit.

"Enforcement is not the only means by which Texas is seeking to increase 55 compliance," said John Staha, Administrator of the Traffic

Safety Program. "The SDHPT is in the midst of intensive efforts to engage the support of the private sector. Many Texas associations, civic groups, industries, and agencies have agreed to support programs to meet federal compliance."

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puppets; a sign identification kit with miniature replicas of signs; colored posters with hazardous traffic situations; an audio cassette; a make-your-own filmstrip kit for students to creatively depict proper traffic behavior; and a make-your-own filmstrip program for older students to provide an analysis of their attitudes and behaviors in traffic.

All programs, produced by a private firm, are available free in Texas and all have been independently tested in the classroom and found to be "significantly" effective in improving student knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

However, it is not sufficient to merely offer such programs and expect to receive the most effective use. Those who would

use the programs need to know that they exist, what the benefits for their students would be, and how they might be used. To provide this information, traffic safety workshops were designed for elementary school teachers to inform them of available material, give them some hands-on experience with some of the programs, and to provide them with the motivation and establish the need to include traffic safety within their curriculum.

"Safety cannot be stressed enough," said one teacher, "because parents do not teach, and we are a fast moving society." Another commented that "I was not aware of the quantity as well as the quality of the

resource materials available in the area of teaching safety."

Available to the schools are also a nine-hour course curriculum on bicycle safety, which includes directions on how to set up and conduct a bicycle rodeo and skills tests, and a school safety handbook for students and sponsors. This handbook provides guidelines for setting up a school safety committee, planning procedures, and suggested projects in driver, pedestrian, bicycle, motorcycle, skateboard and general safety.

Both the handbook and curriculum were produced and distributed through the Safety and Driver Education Section of the Texas Education Agency, funded by the state traffic safety office.



The National Safety Board has requested that a federal program be implemented to alert the nation's motorists that they are more than four times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident on wet pavement than on dry surfaces.

The Safety Board also urged additional research into the possible roles played by highway construction methods and materials and nighttime lighting conditions in wet pavement accidents.

The Board made its safety recommendations to two Federal agencies in a special study of fatal accidents on wet highways.

Computer study of nationwide accident and rainfall data produced a "wet fatal accident index" -- a comparison of the percentage of fatal accidents on wet pavement with the percentage of the time roads were wet.

A state-by-state comparison listed Utah, TEXAS, Illinois, Arizona and Missouri with the highest such indexes (most fatal accidents), and Alaska, New Hampshire, Nevada, the District of Columbia and Pennsylvania with the lowest.

The Board said there are indications that the performance of a highway when it is wet may be related to the materials of its surface mix. The Board also found a need to examine the effects that low "void ratios" -- the relative volume of tiny air pockets in asphalt pavement mix -- may have on wet pavement accidents.

The Safety Board recommended that:

-The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration "develop a program to alert the public to the component factors and magnitude of the wet-pavement problem."

-The Federal Highway Administration work with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to provide weather data to Federal, State and local agencies, and promote the use of these data in programs developed to reduce wet-pavement accidents, and promote further research into the relationship of wet-pavement accidents.

NOTE: During 1979, 474 fatal, 21,349 injury, and 62,987 non-injury accidents occurred in Texas due to wet road surface conditions.



This newsletter is an official publication of the Traffic Safety Section of the Safety and Maintenance Operations Division—and is intended to inform the public on the traffic safety programs in Texas. Contributing articles from outside sources are the reflected opinions of the author and not necessarily those of the Traffic Safety Section. Permission is granted for reproduction of articles or photographs, except where the publication has obtained permission from other sources and provided credit. The Texas Traffic Safety Report is published monthly. Comments or contributions should be sent to:



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