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Traffic Safety Section

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MAJORITY OF NATION'S DRIVERS COMPLY WITH 55 MPH SPEED LIMIT

Texas Drivers Are The Exception

Carpools Pay Off

The Highway Users Federation estimates that carpooling could save the nation \$4.8 billion a year in commuting costs. Also, if the average occupancy rate of rush-hour vehicles were increased from 1.3 to two, at least 250,000 barrels of oil a day could be saved.

The federation, which has been promoting carpooling since 1972, pointed out that a commuter who travels 26 miles to and from work each day could save himself \$3.81 a day or more than \$900 a year, if he joined a four-member car pool as opposed to driving to work alone.

For the first time, more than half of the nation's motorists are complying with the 55 mile-per-hour speed limit, according to Secretary of Transportation Neil Goldschmidt.

Yet, Engineer-Director of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation, Mark G. Goode said Texas motorists have failed to meet a 40 percent compliance rate with the 55 speed limit during the Federal fiscal year ending September 30, 1980.

"Surveys throughout the year by SDHPT indicate that an average of 64 percent of the drivers were exceeding the speed limit," Goode said.

"This means the compliance rate was approximately 36 percent.

only 49 percent of the nation's motorists exceeding "55."

The national fatality rate fell from 4.11 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 1973 to 3.52 in 1974, the first year of 55. Last year, the fatality rate was 3.35.

The 55 mph speed limit has saved an estimated 37,500 lives nationwide since it was introduced, Goldschmidt pointed out.

Under Federal law, sanctions for non-compliance could result in loss to the Texas highway fund of up to \$8 million in fiscal year 1982.

"I think it is highly significant that only 28 percent of the drivers exceeded 60 miles per hour and only 10 percent exceed 65 mph," said Colonel Jim Adams, director of the Department of Public Safety. "Top speeds, the most dangerous, are coming down.

"While we are disappointed that Texas didn't reach the mandated 40 percent compliance rate, we are pleased by the progress made and will continue an intensive enforcement policy and an aggressive safety education program so that the citizens of Texas will be more aware of the consequences in lives lost and federal funds denied as the result of their failure to recognize the need for compliance with the 55 mph speed limit."



At a press conference held during the summer, Goldschmidt said statistics for January to June, 1980 show

Workshops Aimed At Preventing Child Deaths

By: Charolette Guest
News and Information Service
North Texas State University

Members of the psychology department at North Texas State University are traveling through the state this fall holding workshops to instruct health professionals on how to convince parents to use seat belts and car seats for their children.

The team members are with the NTSU Center for Safety

and Accident Prevention Research, headed by Dr. Rafael Toledo, psychology department pediatrician and chairman of the Texas Medical Association Traffic Safety Committee. Other team members are Dr. Joel Butler, psychology department chairman; Dr. Leon Peak and Dr. Angela Burke.

The workshops are open free of charge to health professionals in hospitals and doctors' offices, Toledo said.

The workshops are sponsored by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation.

"We treat deaths from traffic accidents as individual tragedies," Toledo said recently. "Actually, sudden stops or collisions are the leading cause of death in children under 16—and these deaths could be reduced some 50 to 80 percent by using seat restraints.

"In Texas alone, about three children die every day as a result of a motor vehicle injury." Still more children suffer epilepsy and other handicaps as a result of sudden stops which slam the child into a hard surface, he said.

For the past two years, NTSU psychologists have researched ways of encouraging parents to use car seats from the time a newborn baby goes home from the hospital, and at all times thereafter.

Denton physicians participated, writing prescriptions for infant seats on special prescription pads that listed types of car seats, price and stores on the back. Car seat counseling was given in the doctor's office during well-baby visits, in pre-natal training classes and at the hospital following the birth. The hospital counseling proved most effective, Toledo said.

(Continued on page 4)

Claybrook Praises Traffic Safety Program Accomplishments

"We've seen it coming. Three years ago we spoke of the 'Proposition 13 Attitude' sweeping the country. We agreed then that our (traffic safety) program had to demonstrate its worth and, more importantly, had to be perceived as downright essential for the welfare of our people if we were to continue to claim a share of shrinking governmental resources," said Joan Claybrook, head of the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "This is no longer a general concern based on the overall mood of the country. Every year the questioning in congressional hearings becomes more critical. And now our traffic safety program is under specific critique in a report by the Government Accounting Office. (GAO)."

Claybrook made her comments during the Annual Conference of the National Association of Governor's Highway Safety Representatives held recently in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The GAO report to which Claybrook referred states that "Since 1966 the Department of Transportation has provided nearly \$1.3 billion in Federal grants to State and local governments . . . and despite dramatic increases in annual grant funds . . . traffic accidents are still killing over 50,000 people each year."

The GAO report concludes that, "First, the program has no clear, specific direction; second, evaluations generally have not determined whether funded projects have effectively reduced accidents; and third, many measures which are believed to improve highway safety are not implemented."

"That's quite an indictment. The underlying tone that I hear, not only in this report, but also in Congressional hearings, is one of impatience for bottom line results," said Claybrook.

Claybrook said that part of the problem is that much of the 402 effort (traffic safety program funds) thus far has been invested in upgrading systems. Systems which

allow the accident problem to be analyzed, resources to be allocated, and results to be measured. "Frankly, we've done a good job in building these systems," she said.

"Over the past decade, together we have established a truly coordinated national program where none existed. Claybrook said. "The States have mounted state-of-the-art program efforts across virtually all the highway safety program standards. Just in the area of vehicle and operator files, for example, since 1970 the number of States with automated files has grown from 12 to 49. But this has cost some \$100 million in 402 funds and it is impossible to point to its bottom line results. But without the basic tools for analyzing drivers and vehicles, problem identification and planning could not take place."

Claybrook reported on achievements both in new program activities and in the allocation of more resources to the 55 mph speed limit, alcohol, occupant restraints, motorcycle, and pedestrian safety.

"These areas have shown progress which can make a difference here and now," Claybrook said. "But, these kinds of improvements are not enough. Programs must show clear connections between the dollars invested and the results achieved on the highway."

Claybrook suggested a three-step process for safety representatives to follow in enhancing their roles in influencing State and local safety programs.

First, develop an agenda aimed at improvement of highway safety in the state.

Second, enlarge the use of program evaluation. "It will enhance your influence because as this type of responsible management increases the program's credibility, the managers similarly gain recognition," said Claybrook.

(Continued on page 4)

NEWS

FROM

WASHINGTON

New Devices Reduce Rainy Weather Spray From Passing Trucks

Heavy trucks whose wheels throw water spray onto the windshields and windows of passing or following vehicles can be hazardous. The U.S. Department of Transportation is encouraging owners and operators of heavy trucks to take advantage of new safety devices that reduce truck splash in rainy weather.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "Passing a vehicle on a wet road requires a level of skill much higher than that needed in most phases of driving. The maneuver is considerably more difficult when the driver's view is obscured by spray thrown up by the wheels of the vehicle being passed."

Standard splash guards deflect roadway surface water into spray which obscures the vision of drivers passing a truck. However, splash reduction systems, consisting of special mudflaps or fenders, trap and redirect water back to the road. Properly fitted on a truck, such systems afford better visibility to drivers passing near the truck as well as improved rear and side visibility to the truck driver.

Several manufacturers sell splash reduction systems.

The Department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is working with motor carriers and other interested parties to develop a method for rating the effectiveness of splash reduction devices on the market. The agency hopes that the publication of the test results will promote the development and sales of the safety devices and establish quality guidelines for manufacturers.

Users of the new splash reduction devices are encouraged to contact NHTSA to report on their performance and to offer suggestions for improving them. The agency will act as a clearinghouse for this information so that anyone can use it. Letters should be sent to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of Heavy Duty Vehicle Research, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

New Highway Construction Looks Doubtful

The Highway Bill sponsored by Senator Lloyd Bentsen would likely increase federal fuel tax, but doesn't appear likely to boost chances for new highway construction in Texas. In its current form, the Bentsen bill is designed to open nearly completed stretches of interstate highways, and otherwise target money at maintenance instead of construction. The tax section ties the tax to the wholesale price of gasoline. The bill calls for the tax to go no longer than the present 4¢-a-gallon tax, but the Department of Energy would set a new tax rate twice a year based on the rising price of gasoline. Aides on the Senate Transportation Subcommittee stress that the bill is only a "vehicle" for calling hearings on the future federal role in highway issues. A final bill would come out of the hearings next year, according to the Bentsen's aides.



Drive Thankfully

The Pilgrims were lucky they didn't have to drive to their Thanksgiving dinner. Holiday traffic can be tough. So be extra careful driving to and from you celebration. Relax, obey speed limits, and be alert for other drivers. It's a great life . . . so Drive Thankfully.



EVERYBODY LOVES A CLOWN

By John O'Brien
The Pine Log
Stephen F. Austin University

Beep the clown, only one month old, debuted recently at Raguet Elementary School in Nacogdoches.

Beep is the creation of Lynn Weber, coordinator of the Stephen F. Austin University Driver Education Center. She is employed to promote traffic safety throughout the Nacogdoches area.

"The concept is totally my own creation," Weber said. "Working with elementary

children is like a hobby to me, so I'm attempting to tie it into my work."

The Driver Education Center was established in October 1978 in conjunction with the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SDHPT) and Stephen F. Austin University.

Funded by the SDHPT, Weber has found a way to reach the youngsters in stressing the importance of traffic safety.

Weber possesses a unique approach to the driver education program. "To my

knowledge this is the only program in which the educator is in a one-to-one relationship with the children. Other programs are set up in a workshop situation for the teacher, but never with the kids," she said.

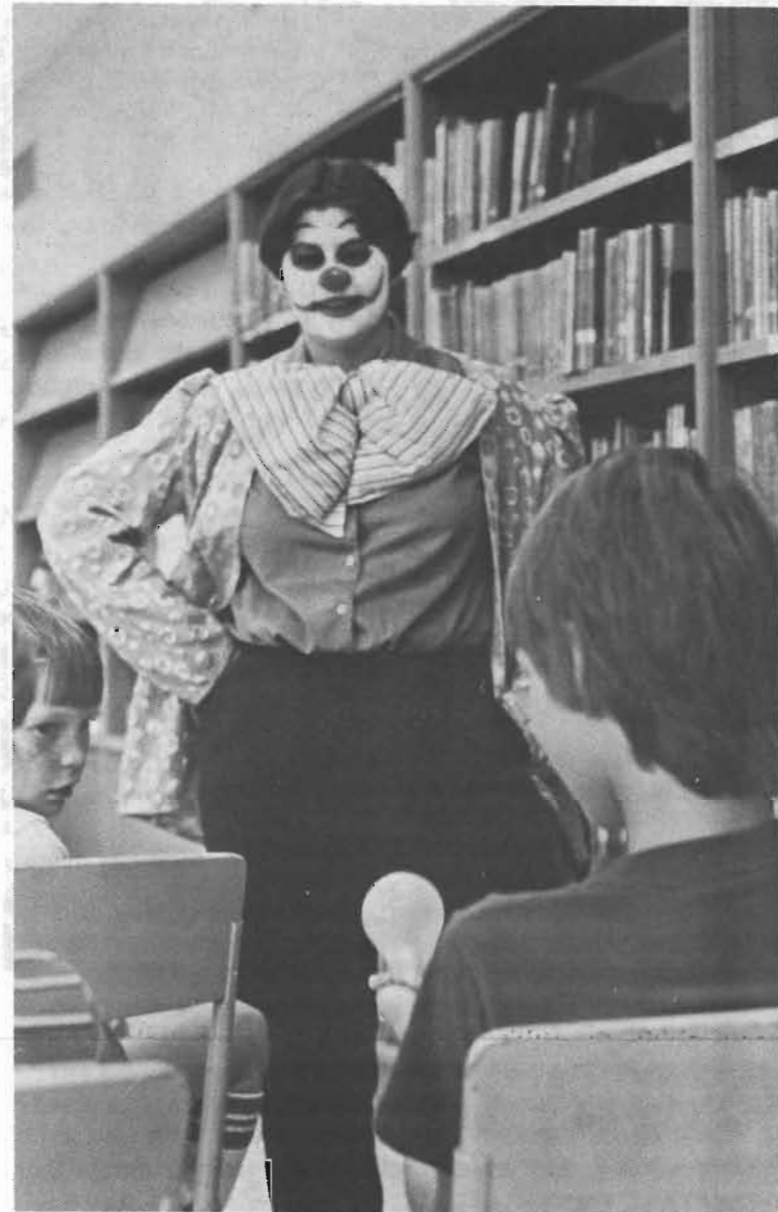
The objective of the program is to promote traffic safety education in the elementary class. Weber presents programs to students and provides traffic safety information to classroom teachers.

In addition to the elementary program, Weber instructs a defensive driving course and driver education for beginning adults. She also presents public information programs such as child restraint lectures, demonstrations and car-care clinics for women.

"Beep came about because it's easier to get up in front of people as a clown than as yourself," Weber said. "By being a clown it makes it easier to break down the barrier between myself and the children. And as we all know, everyone loves a clown."



Beep the clown, Lynn Weber, brings traffic safety to students through the use of comedy and magic (above). She also places her young audience at ease (right) by demonstrating a few magic tricks. These particular students attend Raguet Elementary in Nacogdoches.



Traffic Safety Education Texas-Style

By: Susan Bryant

This is the final segment of a three part series on the multi-faceted Texas Traffic Safety education program.

Texas has 65 television stations, more than 500 radio stations, almost twice that many newspapers, and 1,100 school districts. Thus, a massive distribution system is vital to the success of any state program. Direct mailing is the fastest and easiest way to distribute material; but, as public information directors would agree, such mailings in no way encourage the most effective use. Since state offices have neither the time nor the resources to provide local distribution; a network of regional education specialists has been set up to work directly with the local media and school systems. These specialists are in close contact with teachers, principals, police officials, and safety volunteers who take the traf-

fic safety message directly to the public. They conduct bicycle rodeos, set up displays in schools and shopping malls, publicize local traffic safety programs such as engineering surveys and special enforcement efforts, and organize presentations for children as well as adults in all aspects of traffic safety.

Add more than 25 traffic safety specialists and coordinators to the 12 public education specialists and the sum is a network of traffic safety professionals without parallel in any other state. These specialists are assigned to each of the district offices of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation from Brownsville to Amarillo and from El Paso to Houston. They coordinate traf-

fic safety projects within their regions and provide a solid base upon which to build the total program.

Few areas of traffic safety suit volunteers as well as the promotion of child restraints. As other states have found, pediatricians and other health care professionals are invaluable in supporting the use of child restraints as a means of preventative medicine. The Texas child restraint program is fortunate to have the commitment of the Texas Pediatric Society, the Auxiliary of the Texas Medical Association, the Extension Homemakers and Jaycettes, the Texas Safety Association, and local groups too numerous to mention. Only the March of Dimes and the Muscular Dystrophy Telethon can match the way varied groups and individuals of all interests have rallied around the child restraint cause.

This same energy can be applied to other areas of traffic safety by mobilizing groups in a well-planned and coordinated effort. Just as in a political campaign, a bandwagon effect can be created with different groups vying for involvement in a program.

In applying this type of strategy to the 55 mph compliance program, for example, the Texas Jaycees are organizing their communities in support of the speed limit. As community leaders, they have promoted 55 at their 4th of July and Labor Day rest stops, appeared on the noon talk shows and radio call-in programs, and they have presented pro-55 presentations to other clubs and meetings in their own towns.

This kind of project can have far-reaching effects for the future of traffic safety programs.

First, this program is "of the people, by the people and

for the people," rather than imposed by any level of government.

Second, and more importantly for the future of traffic safety programs, it can help create a supply—not only of people—but also of time, resources, and perhaps even of money.

The traffic safety future in Texas looks promising. "We are proud of our record in building safe highways in Texas," said Mark Goode, Governor's Highway Safety Representative and Engineer-Director of the Department of Highways and Public Transportation. "And we are always ready to improve our safety record through research and innovative technology or programs. The traffic safety challenge is formidable, but we will apply our resources to this task." And Texas, indeed, has the resources to meet this challenge.



WESLACO—The city has just been awarded \$6,358 from the SDHPT to upgrade construction and maintenance traffic control procedures.

FORT WORTH—Twenty-six Safety Town classes were conducted by the local police department during the end of the 1980 school year. This brought the yearly total of students attending Safety Town to 1,138.

ROCKPORT—The city has contracted with SDHPT to work toward placing all regulatory and warning signs in compliance with the *Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways*.

SAN BENITO—The Traffic Safety Office of the city was recently designated as "Organization of the Month" for September by a local radio/television station.

BRYAN—A new Public Education Specialist, Jan Roberts, is now working out of the Bryan Independent School District.

WICHITA FALLS—Midwestern State University is the headquarters for a new Public Education Specialist, Michael Uriniak.

Child Restraint Continued from 1

"People say that infant seats and car seats are too expensive. Well, for the price of two tanks of gas, they can give their children protection as important and worthwhile as a vaccination," he said.

"People say they are too much trouble, but that's because they haven't figured out yet how peaceful it is driving without worrying about the kids bouncing around the car.

"Parents tell me they can hold on tight to the baby in a

crash," Toledo said. "A 10-pound baby in a car that collides with another at 30 miles per hour will have the momentum of an object weighing 300 pounds. Do you think you can hold onto 300 pounds? Neither can they."

Workshops in Tyler, Austin, El Paso, Odessa, Midland, Dallas, Port Arthur, Houston, Galveston, Harlingen and San Antonio have already been held. The workshops are coor-

minated in many locations with the Texas Medical Association Auxiliary, which has taken child car safety as a special project this year.

Workshops are still to be held in: Corpus Christi, Dec. 4; and Amarillo, Dec. 10.

Each workshop can accommodate 35 persons. For more information, contact the NTSU psychology department at 817/788-2671 or 788-2672.

Claybrook Continued from 2

And third, put in place the means for better communications with State and local officials whose participation must be obtained and with the public whose support is essential.

"We must communicate the results," said Claybrook, "and in fact, begin right now to better communicate the dimensions of the crash problem in order to develop an increased awareness of its cost

to society.

"We must consciously structure and target our communications for the officials who operate our programs and those segments of the public who are critical to our success.

"Many State highway safety agencies are beginning to harness the marvelous machinery of mass communications," said Claybrook. "The majority of the

States are now using scientific surveys to document the knowledge levels and attitudes of their key constituencies. We need to expand the use of this strategic process so that we can apply it to judges, police, medical groups, teachers, and key segments of the driving population. We will then be able to plan rational, systematic programs for reaching them."

Retired Safety Activist Receives Special Recognition

The City of Waco recently bestowed special honors on a retired safety activist for his continued involvement in the promotion of traffic safety.

W.F. (Bill) Leonard, Retired Director of Safety and Insurance for the Southland Corporation, Dallas, was recognized for his outstanding contributions to the Waco

Jaycees' Labor Day rest stops. Leonard addressed the Waco Jaycees for the 20th time this year at the annual Labor Day kick-off.

Leonard is also Honorary Vice President of the Texas Safety Association for Special Activities. In addition, he has presented 2,244 safety lectures outside his job duties in the last 25 years.



W.F. (Bill) Leonard, far right, displays a sign used to promote safe driving in Waco. He is Safety Assistant to the Texas Jaycees for their Labor Day rest stops. Waco Jaycees assisting Leonard are, left to right, Andy Schmedthorst, Bill Miller, Paul McMullen, Jerry Jones and Darvin Little.

Light Housekeeping Assures Illumination

Besides remembering to turn on headlights at proper times, drivers also should remember to keep their car lights in proper working condition. Headlight aim especially should be checked frequently to make sure the light is properly directed on the roadway for maximum illumination. Poorly aimed headlights may fail to illuminate potholes, icy spots or debris in time to avoid trouble.

A little "light house-keeping" also can help in assuring maximum illumination. A swipe or two with a clean cloth will clear away dirt and grime from headlight lenses, greatly improving visibility. Corrosion of battery cables and faulty lamp fuses also can cause loss of light, and should be checked and corrected.

While cleaning the headlights, it's also a good idea to clear the windshield of dirt and grime. A dirty windshield

can reduce visibility by as much as 50 percent. Looking through a haze of dirt can also distort perspective, making it difficult for the driver to determine the distance of vehicles ahead.

Poor visibility is a leading factor in fatal accidents that happen at night. The victims of many of these accidents are occupants of cars driven after dark with unlighted or poorly functioning headlights.

NOTE:
Insufficient lights resulted in 23 fatalities in Texas during 1979.



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