

Bulk Rate
U. S. Postage
PAID
Austin, Texas
Permit No. 2771



Texas Traffic Safety Report

February, 1980

Traffic Safety Section

Vol. VIII No. 2

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT BUILDS SAFETY CITY IN GEORGETOWN

By KAREN MC ADEN

Georgetown citizens are building a strong foundation for a complete traffic safety educational program and it's being done through a positive sense of community involvement.

In 1978, the Georgetown Independent School District (GISD) initiated plans to build Georgetown Safety City, an outdoor classroom and miniature "city" to teach traffic safety. With the support of GISD Superintendent Jack Frost and the Georgetown Community School Advisory Council, the GISD School Board endorsed the endeavor in March, 1979.

To start the project, the school board donated land, fencing and \$500. Community volunteers set to work seeking donations of material and labor. A citywide public education program began to gain additional volunteers and to increase traffic safety awareness.

A group of civic-minded businessmen jointly donated the entire maze of sidewalks, streets, highways and foundations for Safety City. K.C. Wiles of Lone Star Cement agreed to truck the

powered cement from Houston. Jim Isabel of Texas Crushed Stone donated the aggregate and L. A. Rutledge of Bryco donated trucks for hauling and mixing the concrete, as did Sikes Trucking. A local contractor, C. W. Hoena, volunteered as foreman for the project.

With a firm foundation secured, donations of labor, materials and miniature buildings came pouring in. Georgetown responded!

Discounts on buildings and lumber were given by the Georgetown Lumber Company and Wickes Lumber. Electrical services were volunteer by Bill Mott and the Georgetown Railroad offered a miniature railroad track. Miniature buildings were given by Compton Motors, Citizen's National Bank, State Farm Insurance, First National Bank, General Real Estate, HEB, Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonald's Hamburgers, Golden Fried Chicken, and Small World.

Additionally, Parco Home Center donated the safety classroom and plumbing fixture discounts were given by Milstead Supply Company. Large sums of money were

sulation" in exhaust systems.

Catalytic converters are the auto industry's major response to federal anti-pollution requirements. Most U.S. cars made since 1975 are equipped with the converters, which in effect burn up pollutants before they are released into the air.

An estimated 500 reports of fires traced to converters

gifted to the project by Merle Lefler, the Lions Club and the Optomist Club.

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) also

became very involved by donating \$400 for restroom facilities and spearheading the drive for donated bicycles and vehicles for the (See SAFETY CITY, pg. 3)

AUTO FIRES RAISE CONCERN OVER CONVERTERS

Reports that hundreds of automobiles across the country have caught fire recently due to heat produced by their catalytic converters has provoked concern among federal and some local fire officials about the devices' safety.

Accounts of automobiles being ignited while parked over dry leaves (because of the converters' high heat) have been reported throughout the country in recent months.

In Hartford, Connecticut three cruising patrol cars burst into flames last spring when the hot converters corroded metal floorboard plates and set fire to interior carpeting, police officials there said.

Although no injuries were reported in the Hartford fires, consumer auto safety advocates promptly called for tougher federal safety requirements and renewed investigations of possible hazards from using the devices.

"A general review is in order," said Clarence Ditlow, director of the Center for Auto Safety, a consumer organization founded by Ralph Nader. Ditlow said the remedy could be as inexpensive and as simple as a "few cents' worth of additional in-



Citizens lend their time, skills and building materials to aid Safety City.



Fathers and sons team up to build Safety City.

When the "battery booster" leaflet was first issued by the Canada Safety Council, there were many media enquiries relating to the extent of the hazard. Enquires for which, regrettably, no statistics were available.

University of Illinois eye specialists kept a tally. Over an eight month period, they treated 62 injuries from exploding car batteries. Improper jumper cable use was the second most common use.

were filled with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 1975, prompting that agency to open a two-year review of the incidents. NHTSA decided the potential fire risk from converters was within acceptable limits.

A NHTSA spokesman, Robert Boaz, said the agency has not had enough complaints yet to warrant another investigation.

AROUND THE STATE

COLLEGE STATION--Two 120-hour courses will be conducted at Texas A & M University's Research and Extension Center in advanced accident investigation training. The courses will train 60 accident investigation officers.

BEAUMOUNT--Fifty student teachers at Lamar University attended a traffic safety education workshop sponsored by the university's traffic safety office.

GRAPEVINE--Breathalyzer Operator Training was provided for 35 officers from seven area towns.

PORT ARTHUR--More than 500 students from Franklin Elementary School went through the Safety Town held by Lamar University's Office of Traffic Safety.



A child is never too young for a child restraint.

HOW TO PROTECT CHILDREN

William Haddon, Jr. M.D., president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, offers these points for better guarding children against death or injury in crashes:

1. Place the children in the safest part of the car — the back seat. That's where they are least likely to be thrown against hostile structures or ejected in a collision.

2. Secure children with restraint systems — safety belts at a minimum, specially designed child restraint devices if possible. (Tragically, some child safety literature suggests that small children should not wear belts — in effect, that they should be left unrestrained if a special child restraint system is not available. As the best research to date shows, the fact is that children ages 1-4 are substantially better off in seat belts than without them. No child should be

unrestrained in a motor vehicle under any circumstances.)

3. Place infants in specially designed, restrained infant carriers.

4. Keep children out of station wagon, van and pickup truck cargo areas.

5. Work to get cars designed with children in mind — with instrument panels, for instance, that are uncluttered with sharp-edged, hard protrusions, and doors that will resist intrusion and also will stay closed in impacts so that children won't be dumped out.

6. Work to get cars designed with increased levels of automatic ("passive") protection so that even children unrestrained by active belts will be better shielded in impacts.

7. And, take such knowledge with you into the marketplace when you buy new or used cars, and act accordingly.

TALKING LIGHT TEACHES KIDS

By ELLEN BATT

In an ever-increasing age of electronics, some children would hardly blink an eye at a traffic light talking about safety.

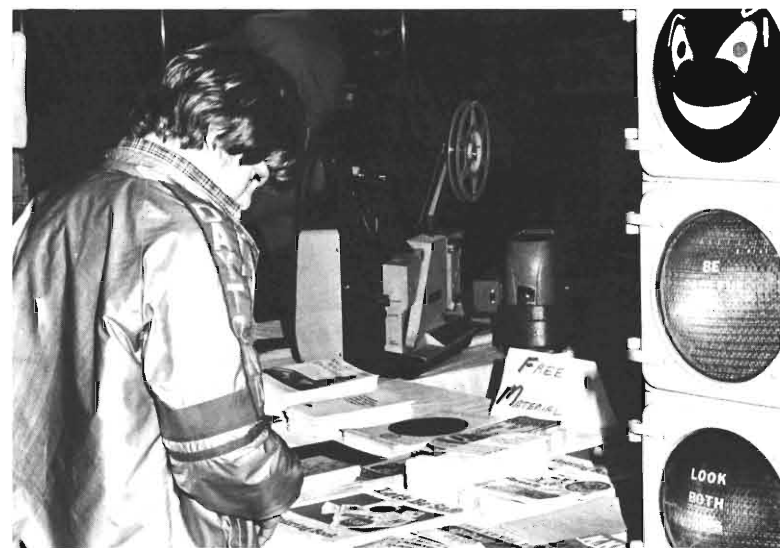
However, in recent months in Waco most of the children who have "met" the talking light have been not only responsive, but eager to "talk" to their new friend.

The unusual device is part of the on-going traffic safety efforts of the Waco Police Department and McLennan Community College's (MCC) Office of Traffic Safety.

The basic goal of the project is to start teaching traffic safety to children at an early age, particularly in the first six grades.

"I am convinced that the driving habits of adults are pretty well set," said Henry H. Syrkin, coordinator for MCC's traffic safety program. "Many have the attitude that 'this will never happen to me.'"

"We want to help develop a new generation of safe drivers. We want to introduce traffic safety to students on a day-to-day



A "talking" traffic signal is the newest star in Waco.

basis, so it's part of their thinking," explained Syrkin.

A talking traffic light seems to be one of the ways in which to do just that. The light is yet unnamed, but a citywide contest will soon remedy that. A "Name the Traffic Light" contest as well as a traffic safety poster contest have occupied the little Wacoans time recently. Schools have been urged to participate in various ways to increase traffic safety awareness among the children.

"Teachers can help," claimed Syrkin, "simply by

talking about traffic safety in their classes and working the topic into the various subjects taught."

Art classes are one way of incorporating the topic without adding to an already crowded curriculum, he continued. However, reading and math are also good possibilities.

The talking light will become a frequent visitor to Waco classrooms from now on...and the class that "hangs a handle" on it will win a party, in the process of becoming acquainted with traffic safety.

PROJECT CHILDSAFE: BECAUSE SMALL PASSENGERS NEED EXTRA PROTECTION

"Childdsafe" is the National Safety Council's child restraint program.

Its two main purposes are to encourage parents to use dynamically tested child restraints for all children under 40 pounds or four years of age when riding in a car and to warn consumers that there are still some unsafe restraints on the market.

The program consists of brochures, posters and an information sheet, "How to Implement Childsafe." In addition, there is a 60 frame slide cassette and a shopping guide consisting of a list of dynamically tested child restraints.

For more information, write: Mr. Chris Imhoff, The Good Life, National Safety Council, 444 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

SAVE A THOUSAND WORDS

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and the highway engineers have begun putting the cliché into practice on the nation's road signs.

Over the past few years the Federal Highway Administra-



tion has been placing increasing emphasis on symbols on highway signs, replacing the printed instructions.

These signs are similar to those used in other nations and familiarity with them will be a help to Americans traveling abroad, as well as on our own. The motorcycle was invented by a German engineer named Gottlieb Daimler. In 1885 he was looking for a way to test a

highways.

To help understand these signs, the Department of Transportation has prepared a new pamphlet, illustrating 130 symbols and explaining their meaning.

Single copies of the brochure, "United States Road Symbol Signs," are available without charge from the Federal Highway Administration, Office of Public Affairs (HPA-1), 400 Seventh St. SW, Washington, D.C. 20402.



lightweight engine. He built a bicycle, installed a three-quarter horsepower engine, and rattled off on an 18 mile road test.

SAFETY CITY Continued From Page 1

traffic safety training on the "streets" of Safety City.

A big plus came when the Sertoma Club chose Safety City as their service project. Sertoma members appear every Saturday to aid with construction. The club also donated a building and equipment to serve in the testing of hearing deficiencies.

A construction class at Georgetown High School, under the supervision of Robert Kleen, also offered to "lend a hand." The students are helping with plumbing construction, securing buildings, and finishing trim work to give the village a coordinated Georgetown "look."

City government has been very helpful by donating personnel to determine proper

plumbing and electrical sites. Mayor John Doerfler and City Manager Leo Wood have been very instrumental in the project's success. Wood donated an "antique" traffic light to add that Georgetown "flavor" and Eagle Signal of Austin donated a modern traffic signal.

All mandatory and regulatory traffic signs were made by the Office of Corrections' Industrial Division in Huntsville.

Georgetown citizens are famous for building their community with pride and a total sense of community involvement. This spirit of "giving with a happy heart" is built into Safety City, which is scheduled to be completed in late spring.

I PLEDGE:

1. I will drive in an alert, courteous and sane manner.
2. I will always operate my vehicle at a safe speed and at no time will I take risks.
3. I will not drive when my senses and ability are affected by liquor, drugs, emotion, drowsiness, illness or otherwise.
4. I will be ever-cautious toward pedestrians, keeping in mind that I, too, am often a pedestrian.
5. I will be tolerant toward other drivers.
6. I recognize that my right to drive a vehicle upon the streets and highways is a privilege that must be shared with others and not abused.



Scenes like this one in Houston can start panic in some people.

FREEWAY PHOBIA IN HOUSTON

HOUSTON—As she drove along the freeway on her way to work, the panic started to build. The trembling and sweating began. She grew dizzy. So she pulled off the side and stopped. Then she blacked out.

When another Houstonian can no longer tolerate the trapped feeling that the rush-hour traffic gives him, he stops his car and gets out, right there in the middle lane, puts the hood up, walks off and finds a place to have a drink, while traffic stacks up behind his abandoned vehicle.

Still another person is so terrified at the prospect of freeway driving that "he's almost housebound," says Dr. Roy J. Mathew, a research psychiatrist at the Texas Research Institute of Mental Sciences, an arm of the State Department of Mental Health.

Mathew has termed these people's sometimes disabling fear "traffic phobia." The fear is most often associated with freeway driving, so often and so strongly, apparently, that it might also be called "freeway phobia."

His findings, drawn from a formal study that is still in progress and believed to be the first of its kind, are tentative. Nevertheless, he believes that traffic phobia has become a significant

7. I will obey all traffic laws, signs and signals.
8. I will never insist on my right-of-way or other traffic rights when, by my extending or granting the same right to the other driver or pedestrian, I may prevent a collision or injury.
9. I will keep my vehicle in a safe and proper working condition at all times.
10. That, all above, in my driving, I pledge that I will—

problem in every big city where freeway throughway or expressway driving is a major part of everyday life.

Other people tend to make light of those who admit to fear of driving on the freeway. But traffic phobia is no joke, Mathew says.

Some of the sufferers, he says, are abnormally anxious anyway, or are subject to other, related phobias, like claustrophobia, the fear of being closed in, as during rush hour.

Dr. Allan Leventhal of the Washington, D.C., Psychological Center, who is a recognized authority on phobias, said that he knew of no other studies like Mathew's. But, he said, "it doesn't surprise me that you'd be able to find somebody with such a phobia." Freeway driving, he said, is a "very intense experience."

Mathew says that he first became interested in the phenomenon while setting up studies on such subjects as migraine headache and the biochemistry of anxiety. Perhaps 5 to 10 percent of possible subjects, he says, declined to take part because they were afraid to drive across town to the Houston Medical Center.

Reprinted with the permission of the *Austin America Statesman*.

"Do Unto Others as I Would Have Others Do Unto Me."

The Ten Commandments of Traffic Safety? No. It's the Austin Police Department's way of telling us all to use our heads and manners when driving. The pledge appears on the back of warning citations issued by officers in Austin.

COMMENT

By BILL ALFORD
News Director
KTVV, Austin

(Ed. Note: The following editorial comment was broadcast in Austin. However, we believe it is applicable to most Texas towns.)

There are those that contend that the city of Austin is home to some of the worst automobile drivers in captivity. That assessment may be true...driving on the streets of Austin can truly be a frightening experience.

Those of us brave enough to venture outside each day must be on a constant lookout for the sophomoric stunts pulled by the other guy. We watch and cringe as we see Mr. or Ms. Macho zig and zag, fully intent of breaking the speed of sound. Unfortunately, it is limbs and lives that are broken.

Because of the record pace in which Austinites are killing one another, the Austin Police several months ago launched an all-out war against speeders. With radar guns and unmarked cars, the police seem to be behind every billboard, ticketing drivers at an unprecedented pace.

It is still too early to tell, but it appears this psychological warfare is working. We constantly hear complaints from friends and co-workers about the big bad policeman who pulled them over as they drove to or from work. Well, we say HOORAH for the big bad policeman. We say we are tired of the drivers who show so little regard for our lives. We say that if you are blatantly ignoring the speed limit, we hope you get caught. We also note that former director of D.P.S., Colonel Speir, has commended the Austin Police Department for its crackdown on speeders. We wholeheartedly concur, and hope the practice spreads to other cities in Texas.

Finally, for those who choose to ignore this editorial we offer this sincere caution. The day will come when the big bad policeman will help load you into the ambulance as you head for the morgue...and on that day, our reporters will offer a posthumous account of your final moments in Austin.

HEAVY TRUCK FATALITIES INCREASE

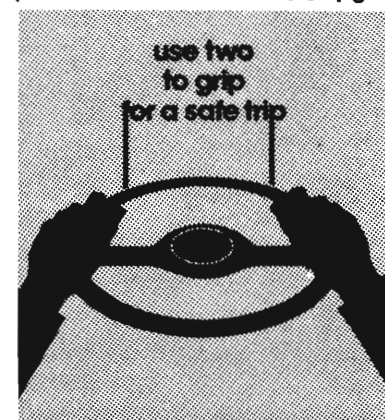
Traffic accidents involving heavy trucks claimed an estimated 4,624 lives in 1978, a 40 percent increase since 1975, according to statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Transportation. These heavy truck-related deaths accounted for 9.2 percent of the estimated 50,145 traffic fatalities recorded in 1978.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics on heavy truck safety covering the four-year period from 1975 through 1978 are based on information collected by NHTSA's Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS). The facts show:

- There was a 41 percent increase in the number of fatalities involving occupants of heavy trucks from 1975 through 1978.
- Almost 30 percent of the increase in automobile deaths between 1975 and 1978 is attributable to fatalities occurring in

automobile/heavy truck accidents.

- In fatal accidents involving heavy trucks and passenger cars, 97 out of 100 deaths are to the occupants of the cars.
- Texas and California continue to have the most fatal accidents involving heavy trucks, but their number of accidents has increased less in the four-year period than those in other states.
- Between 1975 and 1977 (figures are not yet available for 1978) (See TRUCK FATALITIES pg. 4)



Courtesy of the
National Safety Council



BIG TRUCKS & CARS MUST SAFELY SHARE THE ROAD

Now with the maximum speed limit of 55 mph for all vehicles - trucks and cars - you are more aware than ever of the number of large trucks out on the highways. Suddenly you look in your rear-view mirror and there on your tail is a giant 80,000 lb. vehicle travelling at the same speed you are - and maybe even anxiously waiting to pass you.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety through national TV public service announcements has asked motorists to adjust their driving techniques when interacting with truck traffic. Because of the differing handling characteristics of large trucks and passenger cars in such areas as stopping distances, size, weight, maneuverability, and field of view, the Foundation urged passenger car operators to avoid suddenly slowing down or stopping in freeway traffic, don't follow too closely for this blinds you to the road ahead, check the rear-view mirrors frequently to know what is behind and to the sides, signal intentions to change lanes well in advance, and don't make quick or sudden moves to change lanes to pass.

Cars and trucks can safely share the roadway, says the Foundation, if they will cooperate with each other and show the same courtesies that they can expect from other drivers.

TRUCK FATALITIES Continued From Page 3

available for 1978), fatalities in heavy-duty trucks rose more than twice as fast as the number of miles travelled by such vehicles.

NHTSA Administrator Joan Claybrook said, "We are very concerned by the alarming increase in fatalities among occupants of heavy-duty trucks since 1975, and have made truck safety one of the priorities in our five-year rulemaking plan." Under that plan NHTSA will give greater emphasis to heavy duty truck safety, including brakes, tires, rear underride protection, lighting, improved fields of view, splash and spray control, interior noise level, fuel system integrity and ride quality.

In a related development, the National Highway Safety Advisory Committee (a 35-member group appointed by the President to advise the Secretary of Transportation on highway safety issues) held a public meeting on June 19, 1979, to discuss limiting the road speed capability of new heavy-duty trucks and inter-city buses, as well as examining the level of safety in operating commercial vehicles.

The meeting was scheduled after the Trailways Bus Company petitioned NHTSA to require that commercial vehicles be equipped with governors to limit their travel speed capability to 57 miles per hour. The petition claimed that a rule limiting the speed of commercial vehicles would reduce accidents, save lives and conserve fuel.

The Advisory Committee recommended that NHTSA undertake a research pro-



DOT CAR CRASH TEST RESULTS ANNOUNCED

Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Neil Goldschmidt recently said that preliminary results of a DOT crash test program show that it is possible to build small cars that are safer than many of those now on the highways.

The Secretary said at a Washington news conference that he is "particularly encouraged by the showing of such small cars as the Chevrolet Citation and Chevette, the Plymouth Horizon and the Ford Mustang."

"Both the structures and the safety belt restraint systems in these cars performed very well under test, giving a clear indication that it is possible to build safer small cars," Goldschmidt said.

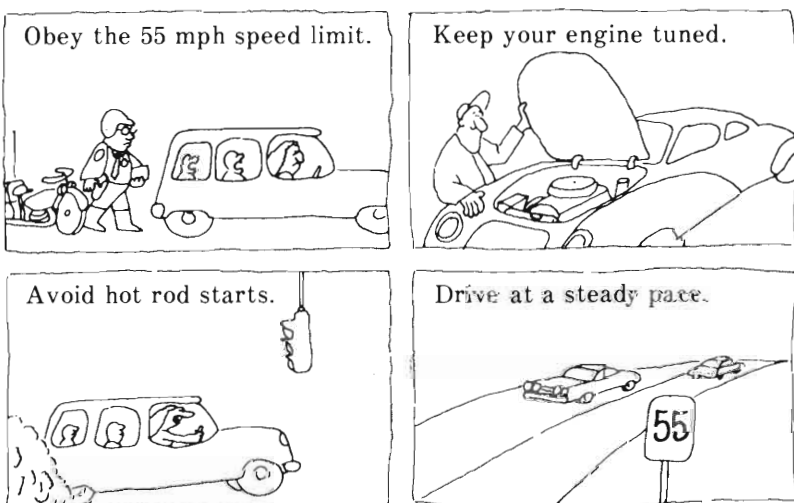
"However," he pointed out, "much of the protection is lost if occupants fail to wear the safety belts. Moreover, in a number of tests where the vehicle structures performed well the vehicle failed the test because the belt system was insufficient to prevent the occupant from striking the dash or steering wheel and fatally injuring them," Goldschmidt added.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator Joan Claybrook, whose agency is conducting the crash tests, said she was disappointed that none of the imported cars tested to date provided a high level of occupant protection in frontal crashes. All the models tested are 1979s, with the exception of the 1980 Citation and the AMC Concord.

gram to demonstrate the the federal government's costs, benefits and overall effectiveness of speed control devices before establishing rules. The Committee also suggested more resources were needed to improve the performance of

the federal government's enforcement of commercial vehicle safety regulations. And lastly, the Committee recommended stricter enforcement of the 55 mph national maximum speed limit law.

HOW TO GET BETTER MILEAGE FROM YOUR CAR...



For a free booklet with more easy energy-saving tips, write "Energy," Box 62, Oak Ridge, TN 37830.

ENERGY.
We can't afford to waste it.

U.S. Department of Energy



This newsletter is an official publication of the Office of Traffic Safety—Governor's Traffic Safety Program—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 Office of Traffic Safety. 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:



TEXAS TRAFFIC SAFETY REPORT

Traffic Safety Section

S.D.H.P.T.

Austin, Texas 78701

(512) 452-8141

Susan Bryant, Public Information and Education

Ellen Batt, Editor