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Crash vs. Accident

Words do matter

In today's society, language is everything, and the word accident trivializes the most common cause of traffic incidents — human error. According to a 2016 poll by NHTSA, a mere 6 percent of all vehicle crashes across the country are caused by vehicle malfunctions or weather, while the remaining 94 percent are the result of human behavior. In 1997, NHTSA intentionally stopped using the term accident to describe these events. Since then, 28 state transportation departments have done the same thing, and now there is a greater push to educate media representatives about the impact of the word. The hope is that the change in wording will drive a bigger shift in public perception.

Northwest/Northeast TZD Regional Coordinator, Holly Kostrzewski, cringes when she hears someone say accident, "I know it's just a word, but it's important in how we view it [vehicle crashes], because how we view it is how people are responsible behind the wheel, how we interact with each other on the roadway."

The term accident was introduced into the manufacturing industry in the early 1900s when companies were looking to prevent themselves from costs for caring for workers hurt on the job. Subsequent work safety campaigns called these events accidents, which excused the employer of responsibility. Over time, the word has evolved to exonerate drivers involved in auto

crashes and has come to be seen by critiques as having normalized mass deaths. "Crashes happen for a reason. They're not an unintentional act. A driver may not have meant for it to happen, but there are specific things that people are doing that cause crashes," says Sgt. Scott Melander, Woodbury Police Department.

In 2015, deadly crashes rose nationwide more than seven percent, killing more than 35,000 people. This persistence of crashes, experts believe, is explained by apathy toward the issue. When a plane crashes, it is not called an accident. It is immediately called a crash and as a society we expect answers and solutions. Traffic crashes are fixable problems caused primarily by unsafe drivers.

Changing the semantics shakes people out of the "nobody's fault" attitude conveyed by the term accident — and this change is also important to the family members of crash victims.

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NE/NW TZD Regional Coordinator Holly Kostrzewski being interviewed on KDAL Radio. Kostrzewski's dedication to TZD has earned her a reputation of chasing down reporters to make sure they use crash instead of accident in their stories.

TZD Program Has a New Co-Chair

Jay Hietpas joins TZD efforts

There's a new TZD co-chair in town — Jay Hietpas (pronounced "hip-us") has joined Minnesota's TZD efforts as State Traffic Engineer and Director of the Office of Traffic, Safety and Technology. He moved to his new position last spring and wanted to say a special thank you to the staff, the districts and everyone involved with TZD for making him feel at home with this new position. Welcome Jay!

Originally from Green Bay (Go Pack Go!), Hietpas started working for MnDOT right after college. But life took him back to Wisconsin, where he worked for a private consulting firm doing traffic engineering and project management. Hietpas eventually found his way back to MnDOT in 2005 where he worked in the Office of Construction and Innovative Contracting. "It was a great job and I was fortunate to work on some incredible projects like the Interstate 35W bridge," he stated.

Hietpas said that even though he is new to the world of TZD, he has always had a passion for traffic safety. His favorite "E" obviously is engineering, but Hietpas also has a lot of respect for all of the "Es" that make up the TZD program. "I'm truly amazed at the emergency medical services and enforcement. These individuals are on the front line. Education is also special to me. My sister is in the education field and she is a great resource as I bounce ideas off of her."

Hietpas also mentions, "the TZD program is absolutely fantastic. I'm blown away by the passion and commitment of everyone involved. The workshops were fantastic, especially the personal impact speakers. They really motivate me to make a difference." However, he does acknowledge that there is still work to be done, especially in the area of distracted driving (his least favorite driving behavior). "You see it every day," he says. "I'm afraid it is only going to get worse as more and more information is pushed to phone apps."

Hietpas believes that creative ideas from all of the E's are needed to address the recent plateau in the number of fatalities and that "...to really reduce our current trend, education is going to play a major role." He also feels that using educational efforts toward changing the traffic safety culture would be one of the most beneficial efforts that TZD can undertake. "Distracted driving, drunk/drugged driving, speeding and seat belt use are behaviors that only individuals can control. By getting these conversations going between friends/neighbors/co-workers, the bigger difference we can make...the fifth 'E' is 'Everyone'...everyone needs to play a large role in TZD."



Jay Hietpas joins the TZD Program as its new State TZD co-chair.



Left: Students at Lakeville North High School in TZD's Metro Region remind you to "Buckle Up." Lakeville is one of the numerous locations throughout Minnesota where the Buckle Up message was utilized to support the spring seat belt enforcement wave.

Crash vs. Accident

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Grieving families are using social media to lobby for this wording change. Sharon Gehrman-Driscoll, Minnesotans for Safe Driving, says, "You hear victim after victim after victim say to you, 'Oh my God, he was drunk, he was on drugs. Why are they calling it an accident? My son would be alive if they hadn't have been under the influence' And when you hear that enough, you get it."

Distracted Driving Simulator Because, *It Can Wait*

AT&T Introduces new virtual reality driving simulator

As part of its *It Can Wait* campaign, AT&T has created a new virtual reality distracted driving simulator, which was showcased at Minnesota high schools this past spring. The simulator consists of goggles, head phones and movement of a chair to create a driving experience that does not end well.

The simulator was displayed at five high schools throughout Minnesota, reaching about 300 students per location. Students also received goggles that they can link through their phone using an app and recreate the simulator experience.

"The students can take it and spread the word and help educate others on the disasters of distracted driving," says Valerie Bruggeman, director of external affairs for AT&T.

This is the third year that AT&T has used a driving simulator to teach about the dangers of distracted driving. Each year, the simulator has been improved by being able to portray a more realistic driving experience, which helps get the *It Can Wait* message across to drivers.

Please contact your TZD regional coordinator if you are interested in reserving the driving simulator.



Above: Students at Eastview High School in Apple Valley try out the new driving simulator .

Below: Students try out goggles that allow them to recreate the simulator experience when paired with the phone app.



Buckle Up Messages Appear Across State

New safety resource encourages seat belt use

Minnesotans were given an extra reminder to wear their seatbelts this past May as stenciled *Buckle Up* messages appeared in various parking lots across the state. The messaging efforts were all in support of the May 2016 seatbelt enforcement wave.

In TZD's Southwest Region, the Kandiyohi Safe Communities Coalition had coordinated more than 30 locations to paint the message. The stencils were provided by the TZD regional coordinators, and together with their local county TZD coalitions, were distributed to as many places throughout Minnesota as possible. The messages appeared in numerous places — including high schools, police departments, — as TZD stakeholders lent their painting skills toward seat belt safety. "Anywhere people will let you paint the message, go ahead and paint it," stated Susan Youngs, Metro TZD regional coordinator. "That was my direction to the stakeholders in the Metro Region."

Even MnDOT utilized their painting skills displaying the



MnDOT's Waters Edge location provided a reminder for their employees to Buckle Up.

message at their Roseville location, as well as at the Golden Valley and Oakdale truck stations — making this the first time that the stencil was used at MnDOT locations. This was due to an idea by Metro's former Director of Maintenance and Operations, Greg Coughlin, "I heard how the stencil was being used around the region and I thought, why aren't we using it here?"

Additional regional efforts included a visual image used at the TZD Northeast Region's news conference announcing the "Click

It Or Ticket" campaign. The image showed 28 pairs of empty shoes to represent the unbelted 15-24 year olds who died on Minnesota roads last year. Despite more than half the state's population residing in the Twin Cities area, Minnesota State Patrol Captain Chip Lemon says "More than 75 percent of the state's fatalities occurred in greater Minnesota."

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Twenty-eight pairs of empty shoes represented the unbelted 15 to 24-year-olds who died on Minnesota roads last year, which provided a somber reminder at the TZD Northeast's Regional news conference announcing the spring seat belt enforcement.

Buckle Up

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In TZD’s Southeast Region, TZD stakeholders used the news conference to take their regional group photo of area partners. The photo is rotated annually throughout the 11 counties in the Southeast Region, along with the seatbelt news conference.

Statewide, more than 300 law enforcement agencies participated in the annual extra enforcement effort and distributed 7,233 seat belt and 213 child restraint citations to those

who risked losing their own lives or others in the car.

Among the violators, was a motorist with her a 4-year-old child riding on her lap and helping to steer the vehicle. The 2016 numbers are about the same as last year’s; however, long-term trends show positive direction in seat belt compliance. The 2015 Minnesota seat belt survey shows 94 percent compliance for front seat occupants.

“While that number sounds very positive, what we do know is that of the people who are dying on our roadways, half of those people are still unbuckled,” says Statewide TZD Program

Coordinator Kristine Hernandez.

A seat belt cannot prevent a crash, it remains the best defense for motorists who are involved in a crash as unbelted motorists are often ejected from the vehicle. Airbags are not a replacement for seat belts in preventing injuries. Taking just three seconds to buckle up will increase the likelihood of surviving a crash and reducing serious injuries.



TZD Southeast Region’s photo of area partners. This year’s news conference and photo was held in Austin.

Kanabec County TZD Safe Roads Coalition distributed this seat belt reminder to teen drivers in their community. For more ideas on how to keep teen drivers safe, see *Back to School Safety for Teen Drivers* on page 7.

What is the latest fashion?
A seat belt.
 It comes in a variety of colors, it even looks good with blaze orange and it will save your life.
 Minnesota law requires drivers and all passengers, including in the back, to be belted.
 Have a great time at Prom.
Always buckle up!
 Kanabec County TZD/Safe Roads Coalition

Farewell to Longtime TZD State Co-Chair Sue Porter

A look back at TZD's inception

After 10 years involved in Minnesota's TZD program, with seven of those years serving as TZD state co-chair, Sue Porter has witnessed a little bit of everything regarding traffic safety.

Porter became involved with TZD when she became the assistant office director for MnDOT's Office of Traffic, Safety and Technology, where the Safety program was part of her section. She says that TZD was "a great program right from the start. At that time, we were just starting our first region in Rochester. I had the pleasure to join that team in some of their original meetings."

Porter worked to change Minnesota's traffic safety culture right from the beginning. She quickly discovered that this change needed to happen both inside and out of the TZD partner agencies. "The early days were really about educating our peers to think differently about traffic safety. It is



Former TZD Co-Chair Sue Porter has taken a new position at MnDOT's Fort Snelling Facility.



One of Porter's proudest moments was the installation of cable-median barriers on Minnesota highways.

not only about looking for 'black' or 'hot' spots where crashes occur, but looking at potential risks and implementing strategies to reduce the risk across the entire system. This was a new and different way of thinking."

Changing ideas on traffic safety even needed to happen among Porter's own peers at MnDOT. "We had to garner support to share federal safety funds with local agencies. This meant that MnDOT would have less money for state projects. People got on board quickly once they understood the data," Porter continued. "With half of Minnesota deaths happening on the local system, our goal can only be achieved by improving safety on both the State and local systems."

Porter is particularly proud of a TZD initiative involving Minnesota's cable median barrier, stating that at the beginning it was difficult to sell the importance of deploying this strategy. "Maintaining the

system once it is damaged is costly, and MnDOT was faced with reduced budgets." However, after a few years, some of the project's doubters became its biggest advocates. Many of the Maintenance employees who remember providing traffic control to shut down the freeway when State Patrol needed to conduct a fatal crash investigation now embrace the program as they would prefer repairing the barrier than providing traffic control for a fatal crash. Since the cable median program began, conservative studies show more than 80 lives saved. "That is 80 families that did not have to endure the pain of losing a loved one," says Porter.

As the traffic culture has changed within MnDOT and TZD, Porter looks forward to changing the culture of all Minnesotans to value traffic safety.

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Back to School Safety for Teen Drivers

Regions share ideas to reach teens

Teen drivers remain overrepresented in crashes, both in Minnesota and nationwide, with 60 percent of teen crashes involving distraction behind the wheel. According to a recent study done by AAA, the top three distractions prior to a teen crash, are: talking or attending to other passengers; talking, texting or operating a cell



Teens at Tri-City United High School participating in a "Ghost Out" in TZD's South Central Region.

phone; and attending to or looking at something inside the vehicle. Additionally, nearly two-thirds of people killed or injured in a crash involving teen drivers are other people than the teen. Teen drivers are a risk to everyone on the road.

TZD partners are well aware that teens are overrepresented in these crashes and have employed numerous countermeasures to mitigate teen crashes and save lives. Now as teens head into a new school year, recent efforts put forth by Minnesota's TZD Regions are highlighted in hopes to stimulate ideas and inspire TZD stakeholders to continue to keep teen drivers safe through this school year.

Planning a traffic safety-themed week or day was a popular strategy in southern Minnesota. In TZD's South Central Region, the Tri-City United High School student council coordinated a safety week in the days leading up to prom. As part of the week, the school conducted a "Ghost Out" where the grim reaper and council members randomly entered classrooms after a mock announcement stating that a student had died in a crash. The reaper then escorted the "dead" student out of the room. The student council

randomly chose 24 students at all grade levels to be the crash victims, and provided a back story on how they died.

Other activities during the week included videos of family members who lost loved ones to texting and driving, a presentation by Matt Logan whose daughter died in a distracted driving crash in 2012 and a traffic safety-themed *Family Feud* game with questions regarding distracted driving behaviors and statistics. The council also distributed candy to students who were wearing seatbelts as they arrived for the school day.

"Peer on peer (interaction) is always multiple times better than hearing from the principal, faculty, or staff. We're all trying to get the message across to have fun, but also to think before you act," says Principal Alan Fritter.

In TZD's Southwest Region, Atwater Cosmos Grove City High School held a traffic safety awareness day where the dangers of texting, distraction, drinking and driving were presented to the students. As part of the day, students watched the State Patrol video *Shattered Dreams* which detailed the struggles resulting from a texting and driving crash that left a husband without his wife.

In both TZD's Metro and South Central Regions, pedal karts were used. In the South Central Region, students at Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton drove through a driving obstacle course.

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In TZD's West Central Region, the Sticker Shock campaign highlighted the consequences of giving alcohol to minors, including teen drivers.

Back to School Safety

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Some students found these mock violations placed on their cars in TZD's West Central Region.

TZD Regional Coordinator Annette Larson then followed behind asking questions. "The course is made to be fun, but distracted driving does have consequences.

What we're really trying to teach is to be focused when behind the wheel," says Larson. Students also learned about the importance of wearing a seat belt by watching a rollover driving simulator, where an unbuckled crash dummy is ejected from



A rollover simulator at Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton High School in Janesville, MN demonstrates the importance of always wearing a seat belt .

the simulator and the driver dummy is also hurt by the unbuckled dummy

Mock crashes remain a popular educational tool for teen drivers with several TZD regions hosting crashes. In TZD's East Central Region, the Wright County Safe Communities Coalition coordinated three mock crashes at St. Michael-Albertville, Maple Lake and Dassel-Cokato High Schools. They also displayed a crashed car at five local high schools during the months between prom and graduation.

In addition to the crash scenario, the regions also provided an additional educational component to create a more lasting impact for the students.

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Crashed car on display at local high school in Otter Tail County illustrating the deadly consequences of drinking and driving.

JOYRIDE Drives Into Meeker County

TZD Southwest Region's second attempt shows success



Electronic signs helped advertise Meeker County's JOYRIDE program.

Meeker County Safe Communities Coalition's first attempt at initiating the JOYRIDE program was, unfortunately, anything but successful. "We didn't get one rider," says TZD Southwest

Regional Coordinator Annette Larson. JOYRIDE has been successfully established by several other counties in Minnesota. Those counties have been able to decrease the number of impaired driving deaths in some cases by 37-55 percent during the past five years. The program provides collaboration between area cab companies, local bars and restaurants to provide a safe and sober ride home for patrons.

Fueled by a desire to reduce instances of impaired driving in the County, the Meeker County Safe Communities Coalition decided to give JOYRIDE another try. This time, however, they decided to do things a little differently.

They chose their annual Watercade Festival as an event to offer JOYRIDE to patrons. Instead of working with just one establishment who was participating in the event, the coalition expanded their circle of partners to include the Watercade Festival committee along with several participating bars. The Coalition also worked to provide education efforts regarding the program and sought area sponsorship, which ultimately rose more than \$4,000 to help fund the effort. The committee sent out letters promoting the JOYRIDE program to the various community representatives including: bars, service clubs, the Watercade celebration committee and fire departments. They also enlisted Meeker Public Transit to provide four buses to help people get home.

A follow-up meeting with all project partners was also conducted.

Another new tactic utilized media (both paid and earned) to promote their efforts. "Media made a huge difference in promoting the program," says Larson. "We were able to spread the word about safe rides home communitywide."

And the hard work paid off. JOYRIDE's second attempt was a huge success!

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Above: Meeker County Public Transit assisted the JOYRIDE efforts and provided four vehicles to help transport people home safely.

Below: Volunteers walk with vehicle in the Watercade Festival parade to promote JOYRIDE.



JOYRIDE Cont.

In just one night, Meeker County provided **225 rides** to patrons of the Watercade Festival — a huge increase from the year before. The Coalition was so happy with the results that they want to offer JOYRIDE again in 2016 and are considering the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve as possible dates. They are also looking at ways to help grow the program and are thinking of adding an additional night of rides to next year's Watercade Festival.



Back to School Safety

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In the Southeast Region, Rice County provided a mock crash event along with a short program following the crash where parents Ron and Kelly Landsverk spoke about losing their daughter Brittany in 2010. Allowing students to participate in the planning and execution of the crash can bring even more significance. Kathy Sandberg, Rice County Chemical Health Coalition, says that, "It really makes a difference when students are involved. If it makes one kid stop and think, it was worth the effort." Student Paige Beaner agrees stating that she believes the student involvement makes her fellow students hear the message more accurately.

Alcohol and underage drinking remains a factor in teen crashes. To promote awareness of the laws regarding providing alcohol to minors, the Sherburne County Substance Use Prevention Coalition created the Sticker Shock campaign. The Coalition worked with area liquor stores and developed stickers and bottle hanger tags stating the consequences of providing alcohol to minors. More than 3,000 stickers and 2,000 bottle hangers were distributed to seven different liquor stores throughout Sherburne County.

In TZD's Northeast Region, the Mesabi Safe Communities Coalition distributed more than 1,700 letters and contracts to parents in the Hibbing area. The letter provided parents with some tips to promote safe driving behaviors

including not drinking and driving or getting into a car with another student who has been drinking. The Coalition sends a similar letter each year and estimates an annual 1-2 percent increase in the number of students they reach. "I know some areas don't feel these letters are effective, but I have some parents comment how they watch for these letters each spring...I feel if we are reminding even a small percentage of parents of the dangers facing their young drivers...we are saving lives," says Coalition member Roberta Morrow. "More importantly I feel if we keep reminding parents/students perhaps a long term goal of this is to start changing norms and how things are perceived. Repetition is a learning tool."

Several other TZD Regions chose to distribute safety materials in a variety of creative ways. In the Northwest TZD Region, the Lincoln High School provided two dozen PROMise t-shirts, wrist bracelets, and key chains, along with other safety flyers and posters. The posters were displayed through the end of the school year. Kanabec County distributed *Dos and Don't* card and provided additional safety materials and candy for student bags to be distributed at the prom fair. Otter Tail County sent a letter home to parents regarding safe driving behaviors and got their County Board to pass a resolution declaring a distraction-free driving week. In the West Central Region, Douglas, Grant and Traverse counties provided mock violations that illustrated the costs of various driver infractions and placed them on student's cars. Additional safety messages were also placed on lunch trays.

Interstate 90 Enforcement Collaborations Continue

Multiple state enforcement partnership proves effective

Working across state borders in collaborative efforts have been utilized by law enforcement agencies throughout the TZD program. Just this past May, Interstate 90 was the location of a 22-hour, multi-state enforcement effort, which spread from Wyoming to the Wisconsin border. "Our focused and cooperative approach to enforcement with South Dakota...will help to make our roads safer," said Colonel Matt Langer, Minnesota State Patrol. Area state and county roads, especially those used to avoid state-line points of entry, were also included. Troopers were promoting safety with an emphasis on speed, hazardous moving violations, seat belt use and impaired driving. Operations also included State Patrol aircraft, personnel with police service dogs, drug recognition experts and motor carrier personnel.

Dates for the I-90 enforcement were chosen due to expected heavy traffic because of Memorial Day and beginning of summer. "We know people are excited for summer vacation. The goal of this operation is for our officers to be visible and help motorists arrive safely at their destination," says Colonel Craig Price, superintendent, South Dakota State Patrol. When all was said and done, more than 1,100 vehicles were stopped with a total of 487 citations and 953 warnings issued. Most citations were given for speeding.

Moreover, enforcement agencies are bringing this collaborative approach to specific locations in their communities and are expanding enforcement efforts to other types of roadway users. Enforcement agencies along the Highway 12 corridor conducted a statewide enforcement effort in late August. Additionally, the St. Paul Police Department has teamed up with the Minneapolis Police Department to conduct a combined pedestrian safety crosswalk events that stretch across the Mississippi River to include both cities.



Farewell to Sue Porter

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"The Office of Traffic, Safety and Technology has a project that is going to dig deeper into this topic. I look forward to seeing if there is more we can do around the topic of culture change," she says.

She also wishes continued success for Minnesota's TZD program and to her successor Jay Hietpas. "Everyone who is involved in the TZD program is part of something very special and unique. The partnerships that have developed over the years are rarely seen in other areas of government/universities/private sector. We just need to stay focused on the goal of zero deaths and keep doing what we know works, while investing wisely in research to keep us moving forward."

Thank you again Sue, for your hard work and dedication to Minnesota's TZD program. While the program may be structured to allow for leadership change, stakeholders will miss you. Much success in your new position as Transportation System Management and Operations Manager at MnDOT.

TZD Statewide Conference

Registration now open

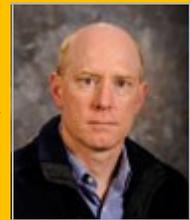
Toward Zero Deaths Statewide Conference

**November 16-17, 2016
(Wednesday & Thursday)**

Duluth Entertainment Convention Center

Plenary Sessions

In this year's opening plenary session, "**Boomers, Xers, and Millennials: How New Research on Generations Can Inform the Future of Traffic Safety and Prevention,**" Rodney Wambeam will detail new research on Millennials and how they compare with previous generations. This dynamic presentation will explore how understanding Millennials might change how we approach traffic safety as well as how Millennials will impact the safety and prevention workforce. Wambeam is a senior research scientist at the University of Wyoming.



The second plenary session, "**Drowsy Driving: NTSB Crash Investigations and Recommendations,**" will feature keynote speaker Jana Price, senior human performance investigator at the Office of Highway Safety, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Her presentation will review recent high profile NTSB highway crash investigations that illustrate common risk factors for sleep-related crashes and provide lessons to guide research, education, scheduling policies, technology development and treatment of sleep disorders.



For general information about the conference including topics covered, intended audience and the annual awards presentation, please visit: www.minnesotatzd.org/events/conference/info/

Want to be part of the TZD Team? Contact your regional coordinator to find out how.

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