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NHTSA Launches Successful Campaign to Promote Seat Belt Use Among Hispanics

By José Alberto Uclés,
Office of Public and Consumer Affairs

May 21, 2001. Los Angeles, CA. Determined to reduce the growing number of Hispanics who die in car crashes each year, NHTSA launched a year round national campaign called “Cuida tu Vida. Ponte el Cinturón” or “Take Care of Your Life. Buckle Up.” This campaign to educate and promote the use of seat belts among Hispanics was unveiled during a press conference at the California Hospital Medical Center in Los Angeles—home to the largest Hispanic community in the country—Monday, May 21 during *Buckle Up America Week*.

The Hispanic population has increased by 59.7% in just ten years, much faster than the U.S. population as a whole. According to the 2000 Census, there are 53.4 million Hispanics; by the year 2050, Hispanics will be the single largest minority group in the nation. This rapid population growth means that the proportion of Hispanic crash injuries and fatalities will increase. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Hispanics from birth through the age of 24; and the second leading cause of death for Hispanics between the ages of 25–44.

The press conference was covered by NBC-TV 4, ABC-TV 7, Univision and Telemundo (top Hispanic TV networks), *Los Angeles Times*, *La Opinion* (national Hispanic newspaper), Metro Networks (traffic reporters), and Radio Unica, among others. Speakers at the event were representatives of our national partner organizations and José Alberto Uclés of OPACA. Multiple requests have come from organizations around the country asking for bilingual materials, in part due to the coverage afforded the campaign’s launch.

The campaign includes several elements. Besides the Los Angeles press conference, there were media tours with network television interviews and national and regional radio

shows with Uclés in Los Angeles, and Gabriel Cano of TSP, the national campaign manager, in Miami, doing interviews with the two top national Spanish morning talk shows—“Despierta America” at Univision and “Esta Mañana” at Telemundo. NHTSA also released a Spanish Video News Release (VNR) featuring US Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. Public service radio messages in Tropical, Cumbia and Rap versions were sent to the top 10 largest Hispanic Markets. There also are two posters of a doctor and a child encouraging the use of seat belts, decals, and a bilingual informational brochure.

NHTSA’s national campaign partners will be crucial to the grass roots effort in dissemination of the campaign’s materials. The Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association (HAPCOA) will distribute materials on the street and to local community organizations. National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) doctors will counsel

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José Alberto Uclés of OPACA showing “Cuida tu Vida. Ponte el Cinturón” campaign elements at Los Angeles press conference.

NHTSA Reports Major Gains in Seat Belt Use In States with New Primary Belt Laws

By Elly Martin,
Office of Public and Consumer Affairs

Seat belt use jumped in 2000 for three states that enacted primary belt use laws during the year, according to newly released state statistics compiled by NHTSA.

In states with a primary seat belt law, motor vehicle occupants can be stopped and cited by law enforcement officials for not wearing their belts whether or not another violation has occurred. In states with second-

ary enforcement, the vehicle must have been stopped for another offense before the occupant can be cited for not wearing a belt.

States reporting the highest estimated increase in shoulder belt use since 1999 were Alabama (from 57.9 percent to 70.6 percent), New Jersey (from 63.3 percent to 74.2 percent), and Michigan (from 70.1 percent to 83.5 percent).

Seat belt use rates at or above the DOT’s desired performance goal of 85 percent belt

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Federal Transportation Agencies Unite to Encourage Seat Belt Use During Summer Travel Season

By Lorraine Novak,
Regional Program Manager

May 18, 2001. Pennsylvania Welcome Center, I-95. In preparation for the heavy travel season that began Memorial Day weekend, NHTSA's Region III Office joined forces with the Region III ONE DOT Steering Committee, a partnership of Federal transportation agencies, to encourage seat belt use and enforce highway safety laws. These transportation professionals, along with law enforcement officials from throughout the region, kicked off the joint effort at a news conference on May 18 at the Pennsylvania Welcome Center on Interstate 95 – one of the busiest travel corridors in the nation.

Representatives from the Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, and the Coast Guard are supporting NHTSA by setting into motion a series of new public service announcements (PSAs) on their respective modes of transportation. Broadcast at airports, train stations, and marinas during *Buckle Up America Week 2001* (May 21–28), the announcements reminded motorists to “Buckle Up Every Trip Every Time” as they head out on the highways.

It's important for the public to witness solidarity from all modes of transportation in

regard to this important public safety issue,” explains Beth Baker, administrator for NHTSA Region III. “Our sister agencies are very receptive to this integrated approach to seatbelt usage. By reminding travelers to buckle up when they leave the safety of public transit and step into their own vehicles, we'll be reaching people at a critical point in their transportation experience.”



Beth Baker, administrator for NHTSA Region III, speaks at the launch of the year's first Operation C.A.R.E. (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) enforcement period.

16th Annual Public Service Recognition Week Celebrated Nationwide



May 7–13, 2001. The week celebrates the contributions made by public employees at the Federal, State and local levels that improve the quality of American life.

In Washington, exhibits showcasing services provided by Federal agencies were on the Mall through May 13. Above, NHTSA's display, with José Uclés, Office of Public and Consumer Affairs, discussing the agency and highway safety with those who passed by the exhibit. ■

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use for 2000 were reported by California (88.9 percent), Puerto Rico (87 percent), New Mexico (86.6 percent), and Maryland (85 percent).

The District of Columbia, Hawaii, Michigan, North Carolina, Oregon and Washington all reported use rates greater than 80 percent. The lowest use rate reported was 47.7 percent in North Dakota.

Twenty-eight states reported increases in seat belt use both from 1998 to 1999 and from 1999 to 2000. The largest was Alabama, which went from 52 percent in 1998 to 57.9 percent in 1999 to 70.6 percent in 2000. Only three states decreased in both years. The largest decrease was reported by Mississippi, which dropped from 58 percent in 1998 to 54.5 percent in 1999 and to 50.4 percent in 2000.

State police personnel from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia also attended the event to launch the year's first Operation C.A.R.E. (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) enforcement period. Operation C.A.R.E. concentrates its activities around heavily traveled holidays and lists lack of seat belt use, along with speeding and impaired driving, as one of the key causes of highway fatalities.

A period of increased seat belt enforcement activity by state and local officials began with the kick-off event. Immediately following the news conference, a convoy of police cars and emergency vehicles wound down I-95, many sporting signs reminding drivers to buckle up. ■

NHTSA Employees Participate in National Transportation Week Event at Potomac Airfield

May 16, 2001. Fort Washington, Maryland. Several NHTSA employees participated in the National Transportation Week (May 13–19, 2001) event on May 16 at the Potomac Airfield located in Fort Washington, Maryland. The Department celebrated this occasion with children from approximately 14 area schools. Among them were Sharon Scott and Margaret Cauthorne who chaperoned the DOT Friends from Hine Junior High School.

National Transportation Week promotes appreciation and understanding of the important role that transportation plays in our lives, and events such as this also offer an opportunity to impart a variety of vital safety messages to a young audience. ■



NHTSA's Margaret Cauthorne at the Potomac Airfield.

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injury victims and distribute brochures to their patients, hoping to see fewer of them return as car crash victims. Corporate partner, Pep Boys—a nationwide auto parts retailer, will display brochures at front counters and post campaign decals in window fronts in their stores with larger Hispanic demographics.

Why run a Hispanic targeted “Buckle Up” campaign? Recent studies show diverse socioeconomic factors that lower the rate of seat belt use among Hispanics. Some of those factors are:

- Hispanics who are recent immigrants may not be acquainted with the use of seat belts or child safety seats and are not familiar with the laws and regulations in the US. In their countries there are no laws enforcing seat belt use.
- Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be living in poverty and, therefore, may tend to drive older vehicles that don't have seat belts or whose seat belts don't work.
- Because Hispanics often have large families and a single family car, the cars are often overcrowded and don't have enough seat belts for all the passengers, they may also lack space for a child safety seat.
- Some Hispanic male drivers tend to think that wearing seat belts sends a negative message about their driving ability.

“This campaign continues our efforts to reach Hispanic people, and given the alarming number of car crash victims within this community, we feel it is necessary that we step up our efforts to get out the message to

Buckle Up. Safety is the top transportation priority of the Bush Administration, and this campaign underscores the President's commitment to safety for all,” said Secretary Mineta.

Cano added; “As Hispanics, we must take an active stance in encouraging our community to use seat belts. That's what makes this campaign unique. It's Hispanics helping other Hispanics. We must all partner up on this effort.” ■



Pep Boy store manager handing out campaign brochures to customers at a Los Angeles store.

NHTSA Celebrates National Bike Month with the Release of the *National Strategies for Advancing Bicycle Safety*

By Marietta Bowen, OTICP

May 4, 2001. Washington, D.C. To celebrate National Bike Month, NHTSA, CDC, FHWA and the Pedestrian Bicycle Information Center released the *National Strategies for Advancing Bicycle Safety*. This national agenda was developed by a diverse group of bicycle advocates, injury prevention specialists, and government representatives who worked together at a conference held July 2000 in Washington, D.C. Rose A. McMurray, Associate Administrator for NHTSA's Office of Traffic Safety Programs, unveiled the agenda that seeks to change the cycling environment in significant ways by addressing five key goals:

- Motorists will share the road
- Bicyclists will ride safely
- Bicyclists will wear helmets
- The legal system will support safe bicycling
- Roads and paths will safely accommodate bicyclists

Joining Rose A. McMurray at historic Freedom Plaza to celebrate D.C. Bike to Work Day and National Bike Month were U.S. Coast Guard Commandant, Admiral James M. Loy; District of Columbia Mayor, Anthony A. Williams; and a host of other local dignitaries and hundreds of commuter and recreational bicyclists.

National Bike Month and the District of Columbia's Bike to Work Day served as an ideal time to release the *National Strategies for Advancing Bicycle Safety*. Biking to work is a great way to demonstrate to the community that bicycles are a beneficial mode of

transportation; to make basic information on bicycle commuting available to potential riders; to encourage people to try bicycle commuting; and to increase the general public's awareness and respect for bicyclists. Various individuals with a vested interest in bicycling and bicycle safety, traffic safety, and public health were present at the event.

The *National Strategies for Advancing Bicycle Safety* report defines goals, strategies, and initial actions that can be taken to reduce bicycle related deaths and injuries nationwide. The report is available on the NHTSA website at: www.nhtsa.dot.gov. ■



NHTSA Associate Administrator for Traffic Safety Programs, Rose McMurray, speaks to scores of bikers about strategies for advancing bicycle safety.



Take Our Children to Work Day

April 26th was *Take Our Children to Work* day at NHTSA with 26 children participating. Each child received a bag of goodies that included comic books, pens, pencils, coloring books, and information about NHTSA's Hotline and highway safety programs. They were then welcomed by Associate Administrator Herman Simms and taken on a tour of the local police station where they got an insider's view of the jail and a chance to see police dogs in action. *Take Our Children to Work* day is an annual event sponsored by NHTSA's Office of Administration. ■

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Coming together is a beginning...
keeping together is progress...
working together is a success.”