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Upcoming Mobilizations Key Discussion at Region IV's Law Enforcement Liaison Meeting

By Chris Broome, Region IV
February 24 and 25.

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. In preparation for the national traffic safety initiatives that will be monitored this year, Region IV recently concluded their two-day Winter Conference for their eight regional law enforcement networks. The plan for the conference was to solidify commitments of law enforcement liaison leadership in support of national goals, provide an opportunity for NHTSA staff to network with its law enforcement liaison network and challenge these networks to discuss various highway safety initiatives that are successful in their portion of the region by presenting them to their peers.

The South Carolina Department of Public Safety Office of Highway Safety sponsored the conference. Over 100 men and women representing the liaison network from Region IV Highway Safety Offices were in attendance.

Bill Kootsikis, Region IV acting regional administrator, opened the conference with an overview for increasing safety belt use in the eight southeastern states and discussed the regional goals for reducing the incidence of impaired driving. He reminded the attendants that they are responsible for the mobilization of their fellow officers behind traffic safety programs as "Click It or Ticket" and "You Drink & Drive. You Lose."

Representatives from the State Highway Patrol in Mississippi, Kentucky, and South Carolina presented ways to promote highway patrol activity during mobilization periods. LEL coordinators from Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina presented examples that have improved the management of earned media across their states during previous mobilizations. The law enforcement liaison directors from Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee's Highway Safety Office concluded the presentations by detailing their current aggressive efforts to continue formulating strategies that not only motivate but also secure law enforcement support for safety belt enforcement.

The Governor's Highway Safety Office agreed to promote continued enforcement strategies throughout the summer. They agreed to implement a Region IV initiative called "100 Days of Summer Heat." NHTSA will gain support of this initiative at the Region IV 7th Annual Colonel Conference scheduled in Asheville, North Carolina on April 26th and 27th. The Colonel's Conference draws the region's top law enforcement executives together to formulate their continued commitment to traffic safety with NHTSA and empowers each state highway patrol office to continue its efforts to save lives and reduce injuries associated with motor vehicle crashes in Region IV. ■

January 20, 2004.
Indianapolis, Indiana.

NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge testified before the full House and Senate on Senate Bill 40 in Indianapolis. The Bill calls for all passengers in any motor vehicle to be restrained in all seating positions in which safety belts are provided as original equipment. It thus extends coverage to previously exempt vehicles (trucks, some sport utility vehicles and recreational vehicles) and to rear seating positions, not presently covered by the State's primary safety belt law. Dr. Runge testified at the invitation of the Bill's sponsor, Indiana State



NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge is joined by Indianapolis-based Drs. Joe O'Neill and Marilyn Bull, who testified on behalf of booster seat legislation.

Senator Thomas J. Wyss (R-Ft. Wayne), and participated in a press event on the legislation following his testimony. ■



The Ad Council and NHTSA Launch Campaign to Promote Booster Seat Use

New York, February 11, 2004

The Advertising Council and NHTSA today announced the launch of a new public service advertising (PSA) campaign designed to educate parents of young children who have outgrown their toddler seat that a booster seat is a lifesaving transition to an adult seat belt. Created pro bono by ad agency Leo Burnett USA in Chicago, the PSAs are a part of the Ad Council and NHTSA's highly successful Safety Belt Education campaign and are launching to coincide with Child Passenger Safety Week (February 8-14).

According to NHTSA, 80-90% of the children in America who should be restrained in a booster seat are not. Children who have outgrown their toddler seat, at around

age 4 and 40 pounds, are far safer sitting in a booster seat until they are at least 8 years old or 4'9" tall rather than wearing a seat belt. Seat belts are designed for adults, not for children, and a child shorter than 4'9" tall can sustain serious injuries in a crash when using the seat belt alone.

"Safety belts are not designed to fit smaller children," said NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge. "Booster seats remedy that problem by positioning the belt where it is most effective."

In fact, young children prematurely moved to safety belts are 4 times more likely to suffer serious head injuries than children in child safety seats or booster seats. However, without consistent laws and enforcement, the importance of using a booster seat is still largely unknown among parents and caregivers. While most parents have heard of booster seats, surveys have found that they don't know how booster seats work, how their children can benefit or who should use them.

In a response to this major information gap, NHTSA and the Ad Council have partnered to launch the new campaign to communicate the importance of using booster seats. Leo Burnett, the ad agency that introduced the Crash Test Dummies nearly two decades ago, once again donated their time and talent to create the PSAs for the campaign, which features new child-sized Crash Test Dummies. The ads target parents of kids aged 4-8 who are



vigilant in regards to their children's safety, but are unaware of the need to use a booster seat.

The PSAs direct audiences to visit a newly created website - www.boosterseat.gov — for additional information about the importance of wearing booster seats. Television and radio PSAs distributed in February, followed by new print and Internet ads this spring. There also are Spanish-language PSAs available.

"The number of Americans who have young children and are unaware of the necessity of a booster seat is staggering. Even our country's most conscientious

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NHTSA Recognizes the Las Vegas Motorspeedway, The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and the Las Vegas Autobody Group

February 29, 2004. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Through a national collaborative effort that includes racecar industry-related partners and the Department of Defense, NHTSA is working to reduce traffic-related injuries and fatalities among 18-34 year old males, the demographic at highest risk for car crashes and least likely to buckle up.

Two public service announcements featuring the Thunderbirds in flight and another showcasing NASCAR racing the Las Vegas Motorspeedway (LVMS) were developed in collaboration with NHTSA to promote the national *Click It or Ticket* campaign. The Autobody Group of Las Vegas underwrote and sponsored placement of the PSAs on local television in the Las Vegas market.

"I commend the Las Vegas Motorspeedway, the Thunderbirds and the Autobody Group for their commitment to promoting the *Click It or Ticket* campaign and to saving lives," said NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge. "This public-private partnership is a model for the rest of the nation, showing how government and business can successfully work together to improve the health and safety of our citizens."

Chris Powell, LVMS general manager said that the speedway's involvement in the *Buckle Up America* campaign is one of many ways that they are trying to promote high-way safety and help keep the streets of Las Vegas a safer place for everyone.

"While our intention in participating in these programs is to improve highway safety, we are grateful and appreciative of the recognition given to the speedway," said Mr. Powell. "We are especially honored to share this recognition with Nellis Air Force Base and the Thunderbirds."

The *Click It or Ticket* campaign is sponsored by more than 150 national government and private organizations and thousands of local community advocates nationwide. ■



Pictured from left to right: Captain Steven Rolenc, USAF Demonstration Squadron Public Affairs Officer, Brig. General Gregory Ihde, NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge, Lt. Col. Michael Chandler, Thunderbird Commander.



NHTSA Deputy Administrator Otis G. Cox speaks at the 2004 Greater Cleveland International Auto Show.

NHTSA Deputy Administrator Otis Cox Warns That Nearly 73 Percent of Child Restraints Are Improperly Used.

February 26, 2004. Cleveland Ohio.

NHTSA Deputy Administrator Otis Cox attended a press event in Cleveland, Ohio, held in conjunction with the 2004 Greater Cleveland International Auto Show. The event highlighted NHTSA's multi-year occupant protection partnership with the National Automobile Dealers Association and called attention to continuing challenges in child passenger safety.

Mr. Cox discussed a recent study that NHTSA conducted on misuse of child safety seats, which revealed that nearly 73 percent of all child restraints are improperly used. He urged the audience to make a special effort to keep children safely restrained in a safety or booster seat until the adult safety belt fits them properly.

During the event, sponsored in part by the Greater Cleveland Automobile Dealers' Association and Daimler-Chrysler, Mr. Cox participated in the presentation of the "Saved by the Child Restraint" and "Saved by the Belt" awards to local crash survivors. ■

NHTSA Announces Comparative Ratings for Passenger Vehicle Tires

By Rae Tyson, Office of Communications and Consumer Information
February 12, 2004.

NHTSA today announced the release of ratings for tires used on most of the nation's passenger vehicles.

"Consumers deserve the best possible information for selecting tires, and these ratings will provide information to help make the right decisions," Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said. "Well-maintained tires, properly fitted to each vehicle and type of driving, play an important part in keeping families safe."

Tire ratings can be found on NHTSA's web site at www.safercar.gov. Here consumers can view ratings for more than 2,200 lines of tires, including most tires now used on passenger cars, minivans, sport utility vehicles and light pickup trucks. Under federal regulation, ratings also must be molded into the outer sidewall of all passenger tires.

"This tire grading system will be a huge help in the often-confusing process of

selecting tires for a passenger vehicle," said NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge. "Careful selection of tires, along with good maintenance, will provide a greater margin of safety."

To assist consumers purchasing new vehicles or replacement tires, NHTSA rates the quality of tires with letter or number grades in three categories: temperature, traction and treadwear.

Temperature (heat resistance) is graded "A" (highest); "B," or "C" (lowest). A "C" grade represents the minimum performance standard required by federal regulation. Currently, 27 percent of tires are rated "A," 59 percent are rated "B" and 14 percent are rated "C." A tire's ability to resist heat is an important safety factor.

Traction also is rated with letter grades. A tire that carries a higher grade should allow a car to stop on a wet road in a shorter distance than a tire with a lower grade. Traction is graded "AA" (highest), "A," "B" or "C" (lowest). Currently, 3 percent of tires are rated "AA," 75 percent are "A," and 22 percent are "B." There is only one line of tires rated "C."

In grading for treadwear, a control tire is assigned a grade of 100. A tire with a grade of 200 can be expected to last twice as long as the control tire, while a tire with a grade of 80 is normally less durable. Currently, the highest reported treadwear rating is 700; 98 percent of tires rank 600 or below; 92 percent rank 500 or below; 72 percent rank 400 or below; 40 percent rank 300 or below; and 15 percent rank 200 or below.

A regulation to help consumers to maintain their tires better and to more easily identify tires that are recalled was announced by NHTSA in November 2002. The rule requires that manufacturers provide expanded consumer information and more clear and concise information about tires. ■

The Ad Council and NHTSA Launch Campaign to Promote Booster Seat Use

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parents currently lack the information that they need to keep their children safe," said Peggy Conlon, President and CEO of the Ad Council. "I am confident that our new Crash Test Dummies will resonate with Americans the way that Vince and Larry did nearly twenty years ago and encourage parents to use booster seats for their children until they're big enough for an adult safety belt."

Since Vince & Larry, the Crash Test Dummies, were introduced to the American public in 1985, safety belt usage has increased from 14% to 79%, the highest percentage in our country's history. NHTSA estimates that seat belts have saved nearly 165,000 lives since 1975.

The new television PSAs feature parents participating in everyday activities with child-sized Crash Test Dummies, instead of their children. Parents are seen playing with a dummy in the park, reading a storybook to a dummy, pushing one on a swing-set and swimming in a pool. A voiceover tells the viewers, "You wouldn't treat a Crash Test Dummy like a child, so why treat a child like a Crash Test Dummy?"

"When we found out that at least 4 out of 5 children who should be in booster seats aren't, we immediately realized that those

kids are just statistics waiting to happen. They're basically crash test dummies. That's the thought we knew would reach every parent," said Kash Sree, senior vice president/creative director at Leo Burnett USA. "The challenge was capturing that thought on film in a way that gave life to the crash test dummies."

The Ad Council is distributing the PSAs to more than 28,000 media outlets throughout the country. Per the Ad Council's model, they will run and air in advertising time and space that is donated by the media. In addition, NHTSA is distributing educational kits to coincide with the campaign to 10,000 teachers nationwide this week, and working with its broad network of non-profit, public safety and state government agencies to heighten awareness about the benefits of booster seat use.

To coincide with the Booster Seat Campaign launch, Dr. Runge appeared in a video news release that aired 417 times on 249 stations in 128 markets, with an estimated 15.5 million adult viewers. Dr. Runge also participated in a satellite media tour interspersed with national radio interviews, reaching millions more Americans with the life saving booster seat message. ■

Quote of the Month

"Nothing will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must first be overcome"

— Samuel Johnson, "Rasselas", 1759