Stay the Course

A time to focus and re-focus

2015 was a tragic year on Minnesota roads. Preliminary deaths and serious injuries experienced more than a 10 percent increase. Every crash category was higher in 2015 – including pedestrian, bicycle and motorcycle crashes. In many categories, the numbers of deaths more than doubled.

This is tough news, especially after an encouraging 2014, where deaths and serious injuries were at their lowest since World War II. However, this is why-now more than ever-it is important to continue efforts to drive those deaths down to zero.

Motorcycle deaths significantly increased in 2015 compared to 2014. Here are some motorcycle fatality stats that stand out:

- 42 of the 61 deaths were age 40 and over
- 38 riders were not wearing a helmet
- 33 of the fatal crashes were single vehicle
- 9 of the operators did not have a motorcycle endorsement or were driving on an expired permit
- 26 crashes happened while motorcyclists were negotiating a curve

Pedestrian fatalities also showed a dramatic increase. After reducing pedestrian fatalities to 17 in 2014 they shot back up to 41. More than half of these deaths occurred in the seven-county metro area.

This uptick in deaths is not new for TZD. Minnesota’s TZD trend line of fatalities continues to move in a downward fashion, even though the number of fatalities may fluctuate from year to year. Last year the numbers moved in the wrong direction.

So we keep moving forward. Why? Because TZD works, plain and simple. Past successes prove that. Since 2003, deaths on Minnesota roadways have been reduced by 37 percent overall and drunk driving-related fatalities by approximately 54 percent. We have also made great progress in reducing the number of unbelted deaths. Initiatives like rumble strips, high visibility enforcement waves, multi-jurisdictional agreements for EMS and TZD coalitions sharing education messages in their communities have all contributed to reducing the number of deaths on our roadways.

The 2016 numbers are still trending in the wrong direction. It is crucial that everyone continues to stay the course and keep working towards our goal of zero. This year promises to be filled with many TZD resources and initiatives. Stay the course and we will drive Minnesota to zero!
Nearly 1,000 traffic safety professionals came together once again this past October to attend the 12th annual TZD State Conference in St. Cloud. Distracted driving and child passenger safety took center stage at the conference as each day began with important messages regarding these driving topics.

Opening day began with a plenary session by Pulitzer prize winner Matt Richtell, who talked about the relationship between the brain and distracted driving. More specifically, Richtell explained the role the brain plays in the decision to still use cell phones while driving even if it means potentially causing harm. During his presentation, Ritchell provided an in-depth look at how the brain works and functions as it pertains to the ability to multi-task. It is often incorrectly assumed that the brain can handle many tasks at once. However the brain has no multi-task function. Instead it focuses on one task, completes said task, and moves onto the next task consecutively.

Ritchell explained the brain function that causes the cell phone to be so alluring even as we realize that answering the phone while driving is dangerous. When we hear the cellphone “ping,” an almost primal “fight or flight” reaction is created in the brain. This reaction overrides those other sections of the brain that tell us that using a cell phone while driving is dangerous. Thus, this initial primal reaction, and the need to confirm our safety, causes us to answer the phone even if it may result in a deadly outcome. Additionally, the brain releases a chemical called dopamine each time we receive or someone responds to one of our texts. Dopamine is a feel-good chemical, so each time we receive a text, we feel good. This causes us to want to send more texts, so the brain can release more dopamine, continuing to make us feel good. This dopamine induced “high” also supersedes the knowledge that texting while driving is dangerous. Richtell’s findings were detailed in his book “A Deadly Wandering,” which also tells the story of one of the first prosecuted texting and driving fatal crashes.

The second morning’s Opening Plenary featured the story of Bethany Olson and focused on child passenger safety, highlighting the life-saving impacts of car seat clinics. Just two weeks before a horrific car crash, Olson attended a car seat clinic where she made life-saving adjustments to her children’s car seats. Although Olson’s infant daughter was seriously injured in the crash, she is expected to make a full recovery. Olson and her other child experienced only minor injuries. In this session, Olson detailed what she learned at the car seat clinic she attended and how it helped her children survive a severe crash. She stressed the importance of providing child passenger safety car seat clinics. In addition, a panel discussion offered crash perspectives from multiple Es including the doctor who treated Bethany’s daughter, EMT responders, and a law enforcement representative.

The statewide conference also provided many great breakout sessions and vendors. Courtney Popp, Washington State’s traffic safety resource prosecutor, provided an overview of current trends in marijuana use, along with suggestions for training law enforcement on detection and documentation of impairment. She also offered ideas for addressing issues that may arise as taboos surrounding marijuana decrease and access to the drug increases. Attendees also had the opportunity to witness the basics of auto extraction after a crash and how best to utilize equipment and tools needed to remove the crash victim in a timely manner. A discussion on scene safety and how to position responding units to best serve the victim was also covered. For TZD grantees or attendees looking to start a “4-E” community coalition, a session provided strategies regarding building and motivating traffic safety partners and coalition members.

Story continued on pg. 5
2015 TZD Star Awards Announced

Each year the TZD program recognizes individuals and organizations who have demonstrated excellence in their efforts to move Minnesota toward zero deaths. Recipients are selected by the TZD State Leadership Team, based on recommendations from the TZD Awards Subcommittee. Congratulations to all of this year’s award winners.

Nancy Johnson, Minnesotans for Safe Driving, is the winner of the Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award, which recognizes an individual who has shown exceptional leadership in efforts to improve traffic safety in Minnesota, build partnerships, and mentor others in the field. This individual will also have demonstrated a long-term passion, dedication and commitment to reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries resulting from crashes on Minnesota roads.

The Traffic Safety Innovation Award recognizes non-governmental organizations for new and creative traffic safety solutions that help save lives. The award is given for work on specific actions, initiatives, programs, best practices, marketing campaigns or products. Diamond Surface Inc., is the 2015 recipient of the Traffic Safety Innovation Award for donated time and materials to expedite the installation of centerline rumble on Highway 12.

A Special Recognition Award was given to acknowledge efforts that demonstrate the use of enhanced innovation and strategic partnerships to promote traffic safety. The DECA Team at Eastview High School won for its public relations campaign designed to promote participation at the Point of Impact Teen Driver Safety Parent Awareness classes held across Minnesota. The team included DECA mentor Linda Dolan and students Kendall Qualey, Logan Engst and Joel Iverson.

The Toward Zero Deaths Star Awards are given to recognize excellence in enforcement, emergency medical and trauma services, education, engineering, child passenger safety, judicial/court systems, public leadership and the media. Award recipients have demonstrated exceptional creativity, leadership, and organizational skills and the ability to successfully motivate and collaborate with others in efforts to move toward zero deaths on Minnesota’s roads.

The following are TZD Star Award recipients:
- Engineering – Tom Dumont, MnDOT District 3
- Enforcement – Trooper Gabe Cornish, Mankato District, Minnesota State Patrol
- Judicial/Court Systems – Jack Muhar, Itasca County Attorney
- Education – Brenda Pohlman, Fillmore County Public Health and the Fillmore County TZD Safe Roads coordinator
- Emergency Medical and Trauma Services – Deb Syverson, Sanford Medical Center
- Child Passenger Safety – KaRee Lockling, Fond du Lac Reservation Human Services Division
- Media - KKLN 94.1, The Loon, Willmar, Minnesota

The following are Distinguished Public Leadership Award Recipients:
- Gordy Pehrson, Minnesota Department of Public Safety
- Captain Michael Hanson, West Metro District, Minnesota State Patrol
Going 12 for Highway 12
A TZD Power Play

The Highway 12 Safety Coalition has issued a challenge for motorists on Highway 12: 12 months without a fatal crash. The Coalition kicked-off its safety campaign November 2015 during a news conference at the West Hennepin Public Safety headquarters in Maple Plain.

The campaign is a multi-agency effort to prevent deadly crashes on Highway 12 and seeks to improve safety by utilizing the TZD “4-E” concept of collaboration. The campaign encompasses a 38-mile stretch of Highway 12 that crosses Hennepin and Wright Counties and ten communities. This stretch of roadway has the highest fatal crash rate in the Metro Region as compared with similar highways.

Unfortunately, the campaign had a difficult start. Two fatal crashes occurred on Hwy. 12 within the first two months. However, instead of discouraging stakeholders, these crashes motivated the Highway 12 Safety Coalition to reinforce their campaign efforts, especially in the area of TZD’s fifth “E” – everyone.

Already a main component of the campaign, the adoption of this fifth “E” represents everyone’s needed involvement to keep motorists safe on Highway 12. In addition to demonstrating their own good driving behaviors such as: not drinking and driving, keeping their eyes on the road and their minds on driving, and always wearing a seat belt, the Coalition is now asking people to take an even more active role in preventing fatalities on Highway 12.

“We are asking that people report unsafe driving behavior as they see it by calling 911,” said Chief Gary Kroells, West Hennepin Public Safety Department, and chair of the Highway 12 Safety Coalition. “When calling to report unsafe driving behavior, motorists should be prepared to give their location, license plate number of suspect vehicle and a description of driver if possible. We want people to be part of the solution.”

A Glimmer of Hope
This request has already been answered. Just a few days after the last fatal crash, a concerned motorist reported a driver on Highway 12 weaving all over the road. West Hennepin Public Safety responded to the call and arrested a drunk driver with a BAC of .24. Metro TZD Regional Coordinator, Susan Youngs, felt that this action provided some much needed encouragement. “Even when it feels like we are up against overwhelming odds, events like this provide a glimmer of hope and tell me that we will reach our goals of zero fatalities on our roadways.”

Liz Squire speaks at the news conference sharing the story of her sister Chelsea who was killed in a crossover crash on Highway 12 in August.
Hwy 12 Continued
Continued from pg. 4

Several engineering solutions have already been applied to Highway 12 while others are planned for 2016. Rumble strips have already been installed along the shoulder between CSAH 6 and CSAH 92, and down the centerline between CSAH 83 and the railroad bridge. LED lighting is also scheduled to be installed in every intersection in Independence and left-hand turn lanes are also scheduled to be added at some of the most dangerous intersections on the roadway.

While waiting for some of these engineering solutions to be implemented, the coalition plans to utilize the other campaign “Es” to improve safety.” Public safety officers from both local and state agencies will increase their patrols and presence on Highway 12 during the next year. The goal of this extra enforcement is not necessarily to issue more citations, but instead to educate motorists on safe driving behavior.

The “Going 12 for Highway 12” campaign will also emphasize specific safety issues during different parts of the year. Through the last part of 2015, impaired driving was the focus, followed by driving for conditions in the early part of 2016. April’s emphasis will be distracted driving, and seat belts and child passenger safety will be the focus in May. The summer months tend to be the deadliest for Minnesota roads, and in June, July and August speed and impaired driving will be the focus. Back-to-school safety will be emphasized in September followed by another focus on seat belts and child passenger safety.

Statewide Conference cont.
Continued from pg. 2

Finally conference attendees had several opportunities to visit with numerous traffic safety vendors throughout the conference, which allowed stakeholders to learn more about available resources for assistance with their traffic safety efforts. Vendors included MADD, Child Passenger Safety, Office of Traffic Safety and Toward Zero Deaths.
New Videos Promote Work Zone Safety

*Work zone safety important for both summer AND winter months*

TZD wants to keep Minnesota’s roads safe for all users, including those who build, repair and maintain those roads. However the warmer months are not the only time workers are on our roadways. Throughout the winter, workers are busy keeping the roads snow and ice-free and maintaining safe driving roads across Minnesota.

MnDOT’s Work Zone Safety Awareness Program (WZSAP) is a free, multi-media, public education program that promotes safe driving for both summer and winter highway work zones. WZSAP has created three new videos to increase awareness of work zone safety:

- **Winter Driving Safety** - Instructs motorists how to safely navigate near and around a snow plow.
- **Summer Driving Safety: Work Zone Safety and the Minnesota Twins** - Illustrates a family’s journey to a Twins game as they navigate through numerous construction sites along way. The video includes information regarding the 511 website, locating construction areas in your route, traffic control devices and signs you may encounter in your travels as well as entering, traveling through, and exiting a construction zone.
- **KEN Talk: Knowledge and Engineering of Road Networks** - Includes information on oftentimes confusing new traffic safety designs and innovations including roundabouts, reduced conflict intersections, diverging diamond interchanges, the zipper merge, flashing yellow arrows and rural intersection conflict warning systems.

An additional resource from the WZSAP is a 30-40 minute presentation that offers guidance on what to do when encountering plows, work zones and those new or unfamiliar driving situations. The program targets both new and experienced drivers and can be a good supplement to 55 Alive and other driver education classes. During the presentation, MnDOT presenters share their own experiences either behind a plow or working in a work zone. A short quiz is also available as part of the program and arrangements can be made to have a fully equipped MnDOT snowplow at the presentation site.

Visit the WZSAP website: [www.dot.state.mn.us/const/wzs/speakers.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/const/wzs/speakers.html) for YouTube links to each video for video streaming and to contact a speaker in your area to conduct a work zone safety presentation.
Holiday DWI Efforts Take Hands On Approach

Drunk driver and victim come face-to-face in Metro Region

Approximately 28,000 people in Minnesota are arrested for DWI each year, and the holiday season was a key time to spread the message of not drinking and driving as both Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays have a high rate of fatal crashes related to drunk driving. Minnesota’s TZD Regions chose creative ways to try and reduce those deaths this past season.

The Southeast TZD region teamed up with the Olmsted County Sheriff’s Office to promote the holiday DWI enforcement wave by providing a camera eye’s view of a DWI arrest from traffic stop to booking. A mock DWI traffic stop was arranged and media were able to walk through the entire booking process including implied consent, mugshots and fingerprinting.

Officers used fatal vision goggles with varying strengths to run sobriety field tests on reporters prior to arresting them for a “mock” DWI. Reporters were asked to balance on one foot while counting and look at their toes and to walk a straight line, heel-to-heel while wearing the goggles. “There are certain signs we look for and you know balance is a big thing and following instructions is another thing that people who are impaired have a hard time doing,” said Sgt. Troy Christianson from the Minnesota State Patrol.

The reporter was then taken to the county jail, where he was booked for DWI and had mugshots taken.

Authorities say during Thanksgiving more than four people are arrested every hour for DWI. “A lot of it’s because the longer weekend with family gatherings and a lot of parties, so that’s why we will see an increased in DWI arrests. It’s also a leading factor in fatal crashes,” said Christianson.

According to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 111 people lost their lives and more than 2,000 people were injured due to alcohol-related crashes in 2014.

In the Metro Region, a daughter came face-to-face with the drunk driver who killed her mother 14 years ago. She asked Minnesotans to drive sober this holiday season-and always.

The crash that killed Courtney Pogones’ mother, Nancy Robling, happened near Jordan, Minnesota, when Craig Barnd made the fatal decision to drive drunk.

Consequences of this decision have forever changed both of their lives. “I took a life because I chose a drink over a sober ride. It’s easy to think ‘I’ve done this before. I’ll be okay.’ That used to be me until my choices caught up with me in the worst way,” said Bard at the news conference.

“My life has gone on, but it’s never been the same,” said Pogones. “That’s why I’m joining Craig today to say ‘enough is enough’ and to ask Minnesotans to pledge to drive sober, today and every day.” Barnd echoes her sentiments, “I want to do what I can to keep others from traveling that same path and living with a lifetime of regret and sadness.”

Participants in the Southeast TZD Region’s DWI news conference.
JOYRIDE Program Expanding
Driving TZD’s Northeast Region to zero deaths

The Northeast TZD Region is looking to expand its JOYRIDE program. The JOYRIDE program, a collaboration between area cab companies and local bars and restaurants, provides a safe and sober ride home for patrons. JOYRIDE began in Northeast Minnesota last fall and is modeled after similar programs such as SafeCab in Isanti County, which has seen a significant decrease in DWIs since its inception in 2003. JOYRIDE is established in other Minnesota counties, and they have been able to decrease the DWI stats by 37-55 percent the past five years.

“It is an incredible program. If we continue to see participation in Duluth, we would like to see the same results,” said Allison Nicolson, program coordinator for Drvg 4 Safe Communities.

“Between 2006 and 2013, Isanti County saw a 67.6 percent decrease in DWI arrests, which area officials say is due in large part to the implementation of the Isanti County Safe Cab program.”

Currently eight bars in the Northeast Region participate in the program and it is supported by the Driving 4 Safe Communities Coalition whose focus is to make roads safer promoting seat belt use, sober driving, attentive driving and responsible hosting. There are approximately 1,000 DWI arrests in Duluth annually. The Coalition is looking to cut that number in half.

How It Works
Participating establishments provide their patrons with a $7 voucher toward a ride from one of three area cab companies. Funding comes partially from the establishments with a bar contributing $4, while the remaining $3 is provided by anonymous donors and beer wholesalers. Returns since the program started in February are showing each bar is using about five to eight vouchers a month and the program is currently providing between 125 and 150 free or reduced-cost cab rides every month.

Now the program in Twin Ports is looking to expand its services and last December hosted an event at Bent Paddle Brewery in Duluth to recruit more participants. “The location was chosen because those were bars interested in participating and offered a free venue. The goal being to network, invite bar owners, give them free resources, answer their questions and get them to sign on,” said Nicolson.

Chief Judge Shaun R. Floerke of Minnesota's Sixth Judicial District also attended. He spoke about the importance of the program and the incredible public safety impacts other jurisdictions have achieved through similar programs.

“This is the time when America drinks and drives more than any other-between Thanksgiving and New Year’s. So if people can start changing their habits, take a cab, have a designated driver, make a plan, the roads are safer,” said Judge Floerke.

Story continued on pg. 9
**JOYRIDE Continued**

Two events to promote JOYRIDE occurred in Duluth in November at Bent Paddle for the West Duluth and Proctor bars and The Rex for the East Duluth bars. “Currently, we had 8 bars and after the January 4th event we had 16 total bars sign on to become JOYRIDE members!” said Nicolson.

Holly Kostrewski, TZD regional coordinator for Minnesota’s Northeast Region echoes Nicolson’s excitement, “St. Louis County continues to be the top three deadliest counties for alcohol-related deaths and serious injuries. JOYRIDE is a pivotal partnership to reduce these from occurring. The partnership between the bar owners, the courts, law enforcement, beer wholesaler and cab companies. Together we will drive Northeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths!”

**DWI Posters**

**Cruisin/Boozin/Losing and Bad Fashion Statements**

Creative drunk driving awareness efforts took place in Minnesota’s South Central and Metro Regions. Each region created and distributed a DWI awareness poster to encourage people to plan a sober ride during the holidays.

You Booze, You Cruise, You Lose was the theme for South Central’s poster. The poster highlighted TZD regional partners and subtly illustrated the number of extra enforcement on patrol during the holidays.

The Metro Region chose a light-hearted approach to the serious topic of drunk driving by encouraging people to choose their holiday fashion wisely.

*Left: TZD South Central Region’s poster highlighting regional partners. Above: TZD Metro Region’s poster displayed in a bar in downtown Anoka.*

*Both posters were distributed in alcohol-serving establishments throughout both regions during the holidays.*
New Resource for Teen and Young Drivers  
**Toolkit promotes safety for young drivers and includes multiple TZD resources**

The Minnesota Local Road Research Board has developed a Younger Driver Toolkit for local agencies to utilize in keeping teens and younger drivers safe. Crash data consistently shows that teen drivers are overrepresented in traffic-related deaths and severe injuries. In addition, younger drivers, aged 21-30, are also overrepresented. Enter the toolkit, which provides local city and county transportation as well as traffic safety engineering staff with information to conduct presentations to improve safety for Minnesota’s highest risk driving population. “This toolkit was primarily developed to provide local agencies with the information and tools they need to educate their community on younger driver issues,” said Rene Kuehl, senior associate, SRF Consulting, who was instrumental in developing the toolkit.

**Three Part Safety Foundation**

More than just education, the kit provides a foundation to understand the reasons behind why younger drivers have more severe crashes and also provides ideas and resources to help educate and promote community engagement to reduce younger driver crashes. Three main educational components are found in the toolkit:

*Fact Sheets*

A series of five facts sheets based on fatal and life-changing injury crashes were developed to highlight younger driver involvement in crashes. The crash sheets are specific to Minnesota young driver data in order to best focus resources and strategies to strengthen this behavior change. The first fact sheet provides a summary of crashes for all younger drivers, followed by four fact sheets highlighting younger driver involvement in specific driver behaviors.

*Available Public Service Announcements*

A listing of popular traffic safety public service announcement videos for the various behavioral issues is also included. The videos were rated by a teen-based focus group to identify the best videos geared to change behavior.

*Young Driver PowerPoint Presentation Template*

The template incorporates the data from the fact sheets and can be used by local agency representatives to prepare presentations on younger drivers for their individual communities. The toolkit also contains additional resources including: suggested community-based safety strategies to strengthen younger driver safety; TZD partnership resources; and links to leverage local safety initiatives. These items can be used together or individually as needed. The toolkit can be downloaded at the following link:  [http://www.dot.state.mn.us/research/TS/2015/2015RIC04.pdf](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/research/TS/2015/2015RIC04.pdf)
TZD Regional Workshops on the Horizon
Registration now open

There’s still time to register for the 2016 Toward Zero Deaths regional workshops, scheduled for April, May and June in eight Minnesota TZD regions. These workshops help facilitate Minnesota TZD’s goal of creating a collaborative, comprehensive, and regional approach to reducing traffic deaths and severe injuries.

Workshop goals include encouraging traffic safety as a priority for policymakers, providing a method to bring traffic safety programs into local communities and offering a networking opportunity for traffic safety advocates. There is no cost to attend, but registration is required. Registration information is available on each workshop’s web page:

- **April 13**—Metro Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, Prom Center, 484 Inwood Avenue North, Oakdale (register by March 31)
- **April 22**—Southwest Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, Jackpot Junction, 39375 County Highway 24, Morton (register by April 8)
- **April 26**—South Central Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, Country Inn and Suites, 1900 Premier Drive, Mankato (register by April 12)
- **May 5**—Southeast Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, International Event Center, 7333 Airport View Drive SW, Rochester (register by April 21)
- **May 9**—West Central Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, Thumper Pond, 300 Thumper Lodge Road, Ottertail (register by April 26)
- **May 16**—East Central Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, MnDOT Training Center, 3725 12th Street North, St. Cloud (register by May 3)
- **May 25**—Northwest Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, Sanford Center, 1111 Event Center Drive NE, Bemidji (register by May 11)
- **June 16**—Northeast Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop, Spirit Mountain, 900 Spirit Mountain Place, Duluth (register by June 3)

**Exhibitor Registration**

To register as an exhibitor for any of the regional workshops, please complete the [online exhibitor registration form](#). Registration deadlines are two weeks prior to the date of each workshop. There is no cost to exhibit. However, in order to attend the workshop, you must also register as a participant. Completing the exhibitor registration form does not register you as a participant at the workshop.

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

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Jay Heitpas, MnDOT and Donna Berger, DPS — TZD State Co-Chairs