Motorcycle Awareness Campaign Launches in Texas  To address an alarming upward trend in motorcycling fatalities, the Texas Department of Transportation teamed with the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Center for Transportation Safety to develop a new statewide motorcycle safety awareness campaign.

Latest National Fatality Rate Report Shows Increase in Motorcycle-Related Deaths  According to 2006 preliminary figures from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), motorcycle rider deaths continued a nine-year increase from 4,576 in 2005 to 4,810, a 5.1 percent rise in one year.

Third Annual Motorcycle Safety Forum Scheduled for February  The third annual Motorcycle Safety Forum is scheduled for February 13 in Austin, TX.

Survey Shows Slight Increase in Motorcycle Helmet Usage  Annual survey by the Center for Transportation Safety for the Texas Department of Transportation shows a modest increase from last year.

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New Staff
Motorcycle Awareness Campaign Launches in Texas

By Brandon Webb

The growing popularity of motorcycles ensures a greater need for educating riders about the importance of being seen, and the public about the growing presence of motorcycles in the traffic mix.

Texas has one of the largest motorcycling populations in the United States and more than its share of fatal motorcycle crashes. According to Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data, 360 motorcyclists were killed in Texas in 2005, a 24 percent increase in fatalities over the previous year.

To address an alarming upward trend in motorcycling fatalities, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) teamed with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Center for Transportation Safety at the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to develop a new statewide motorcycle safety awareness campaign.

"We are pleased to be working with TTI in their efforts to create messages to inform both riders and car drivers on ways to improve motorcycle safety and ultimately lower rider deaths and injuries," says Clif Burdette, coordinator for DPS Motorcycle Safety Unit. "The materials will address the importance of getting riders properly trained, driver awareness of motorcycles, as well as the dangers of riding impaired. It was in the early 1990s that the existing materials were produced, so we look forward to having updated brochures and billboards to get the word out about motorcycle safety and help reduce motorcycle-related crashes, injuries and fatalities in Texas."

TTI Associate Research Scientist Patricia Turner leads the Center for Transportation Safety's project to develop the new motorcycle safety public awareness campaign. "Because no motorcycle safety materials have been developed in Texas since the early 1990s, we knew we needed a comprehensive motorcycle safety public awareness program," says Turner.

Research conducted at TTI and elsewhere shows that rider inexperience, alcohol and drugs, speeding and driver and rider inattention are key factors in crashes that result in fatalities for motorcyclists. New safety campaign materials have been tailored to address these factors. One of the campaign materials is a video aimed at increasing motorist awareness. The video will detail safe driving practices which are necessary for avoiding injuries to motorcyclists.

"Someone dies nearly every day riding a motorcycle in Texas," says Carlos Lopez, director of TxDOT's Traffic Operations Division. "More than 90 percent of crashes involving motorcycles results in death, or some level of injury, to the motorcyclist. We are reminding drivers to be on the lookout for motorcyclists, especially at intersections where many crashes occur. With the growing popularity of motorcycling, it is more important than ever for drivers to share the road with motorcyclists. Educating both motorcycle riders and vehicle drivers is essential to improving motorcycle safety and saving lives."

Please visit the campaign website at http://looklearnlive.org/

Key Motorcycle Statistics

**Texas in 2005**:  
- The state has one of the largest motorcycle populations in the country.  
- Motorcycle-related deaths jump 25 percent over the previous year.  
- Registrations grow by 15 percent (a measure of riding popularity).  
- Forty-two percent of riders killed in crashes test positive for alcohol.  
- Nearly 60 percent of riders involved in fatal crashes were riding without a helmet.

* NHTSA preliminary Fatality Analysis Reporting System data
Nationally in 2006**:

- Total traffic deaths drop to their lowest level in five years; motorcycle rider deaths are up for the ninth consecutive year. They now account for 11 percent of all traffic fatalities, exceeding even pedestrian deaths for the first time in more than 30 years.

** NHTSA July 2006 “Traffic Safety Annual Assessment—a preview”

Campaign Billboards
Latest National Fatality Rate Report Shows Increase in Motorcycle-Related Deaths

By Rick Davenport

A slow but steady decrease in the overall traffic fatality rate is welcome news to TTI safety experts, but it’s partially overshadowed by an increase in motorcycle and alcohol-related deaths.

According to 2006 preliminary figures from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), the number of people killed in traffic crashes in the U.S. declined from 43,510 in 2005 to 42,642. Overall, Texas had 61 fewer reported total traffic deaths in 2006, a 1.7 percent decrease. The lowest number of motor vehicle deaths in 5 years. However, motorcycle rider deaths continued a nine-year increase from 4,576 in 2005 to 4,810, a 5.1 percent rise in one year.

"These early numbers showing a reduction in fatalities on the nation’s highways are good news, but the influence of alcohol and speeding on traffic deaths is still overwhelming, especially on rural roadways,” said John Mounce, TTI’s director of the Center for Transportation Safety (CTS). According to the NHTSA report, alcohol-related fatalities increased slightly (+0.1 percent) in 2006.

"Excessive speed, inexperience, impairment, and rider and driver inattention are common factors in motorcycle deaths,” said Associate Research Scientist Patricia Turner, who leads motorcycle research efforts at CTS. "It’s unfortunate that as the popularity of motorcycles increases so too does the number of fatalities. We have a lot of work to do in finding ways to prevent these deaths.”

View NHTSA report:
http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810791.PDF

Third Annual Motorcycle Safety Forum Scheduled for February 13

By Chris Sasser

The third annual Motorcycle Safety Forum is scheduled for February 13 in Austin, TX at the Brown Distributing Company. Lead participating agencies include the Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Center for Transportation Safety at Texas Transportation Institute.

This year’s forum is expected to build upon the momentum gained from the previous two events and will bring together statewide motorcycle advocates to:

- address motorcycle safety issues,
- share expertise,
- raise the public’s awareness about motorcycle safety issues, and
- help guide state motorcycle safety planning efforts.

Approximately 70 traffic safety professionals, including citizen motorcycle advocates, law enforcement, educators, and Federal and state motorcycle safety representatives, attended last year’s Motorcycle Safety Forum in Austin on February 6, 2007.
Among the topics covered in that meeting were forming a statewide motorcycle safety group and developing a motorcycle safety strategic plan with three main components: training and education, highway design and environment, and forming partnerships.

The group also discussed ways to increase interest in motorcycle safety, and short term solutions to reduce crashes.

The forum began in response to the alarming and consistently growing trend in motorcycle fatalities nationwide and in Texas.

For more information, contact Patricia Turner at 979-458-2619 or p-turner@tamu.edu.
For registration information, please see:  http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/
The forum will hold at the Brown Distributing Company, 8711 Johnny Morris Road, Austin, TX 78724, (512) 478-9353. Please click here for a map.

Motorcycle Helmet Usage in Texas Increases Slightly

Motorcycle helmet use rates have been on the decline in Texas since the repeal of its universal helmet law, dropping from 99.7% in 1997 to 60.9% in 2007, which represented an increase from the 58.6% rate in 2006. Motorcycle helmet use data is collected each year by the Texas Transportation Institute in conjunction with the statewide survey of safety belt use at intersections in 22 Texas counties.
CTS News Briefs

CTS Research Pushes Legislation; Recognized

By Jason Beesinger

Becky Davies’ recent project work, entitled “Alcohol, Drugs, and Driving: Improving the Reporting of Toxicology Information,” was recently recognized by TxDOT and NHTSA as a “significant achievement.” Ms. Davies’ work aimed to reduce the number of DWI-related crashes, injuries and fatalities and improve blood alcohol concentration (BAC) testing and reporting to the State’s Crash Records Information System (CRIS). As a result of the efforts put forth in this project, HB423 was passed and signed into law effective September 1, 2007 to require Medical Examiners and Justices of the Peace to report to the DPS Crash Records Bureau all toxicology results for drivers and pedestrians killed in motor vehicle crashes. Also, another project for FY08 has been contracted to continue these efforts and to increase the reporting of BAC for surviving drivers in fatal crashes. This project conducts surveys of people involved in the collection and reporting of toxicology reports, publishes a newsletter, and involves state agencies, legislators and other policy-makers in the issue.

For more information, contact Becky Davies at 979-862-6300 or b-davies@tamu.edu.

Center Staff Awarded Herbert H. Richardson Team Award

By Jason Beesinger

CTS researchers Katie Womack and Val Pezoldt were among those recognized at TTI Day 2007 for their work with the award winning Teens in the Driver Seat campaign. The group, headed by Russell Henk of TTI’s Research and Implementation Division, was awarded the Herbert H. Richardson Team Award. The TDS program is an awareness campaign built around research on the key risk factors to teen drivers. Throughout planning and execution of the project, the team has remained focused and driven by the sincere desire to save young lives. Teens in the Driver Seat is an example of the success that can be realized when diverse teams of scientists, engineers, communicators, and other professionals join together with the public in a shared vision. It is truly a team effort, relying on researchers and staff from multiple divisions, programs, and urban offices within TTI working together to expand the program across Texas and into other states. At the heart of the program is the team of students that carries the message to organizations in the hope of saving the lives of friends and classmates. Equally instrumental are parents, administrators, government officials, and sponsors. The award-winning effort includes implementation and evaluations teams working toward continued success in saving lives.

Those recognized include:

Russell Henk, Bernie Fette, Kandis Salazar, Krizia Martinez, Andrew Ballard, Gary Barricklow, Tina Geiselbrecht, Ken Giusti, Lu Ann Theiss, Jeff Shelton, Rafael Aldrete, Kathy Montemayor, Katie Womack, Val Pezoldt, Brad Hoover, Tobey Lindsey, Rose Matejka, Brandon Webb, Clyde Hance, David Martin, Rick Davenport, John Henry, Mark Coppock, Khyle Dietz and Vicky Nelson

For more information, contact Russell Henk at 210-979-9411 or r-henk@tamu.edu.
The Human Factors Group of the Center for Transportation Safety would like to welcome **Dr. Greg Davis** to TTI. Greg joins TTI as an Assistant Research Scientist. He is a native of Fort Worth and attended TCU receiving a Bachelor’s and Ph.D in Experimental Psychology. Greg will be working initially with several TOG researchers on TxDOT projects. His most recent post was with the FHWA Safety R&D Team at the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center in suburban Washington DC where he worked in the areas of human factors of ITS intersection safety, geometric design, and road safety audits. He’s looking forward to working with TOG researchers in the areas of intelligent intersections and vehicle infrastructure integration projects. Greg can be reached at 979-862-3699 or g-davis@tamu.edu.

**Kelly Wise** joined the Behavioral Research Group this summer, as a Research Associate. Kelly comes from Hillsboro, TX. She is a new graduate of Texas A&M University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Leadership and Development. She comes to the Center from a previous student position with TTI’s Transportation Planning Group (HTP). Kelly is currently working on efforts to improve “tween” safety by increasing belt usage and awareness of “tween” passenger safety issues. Kelly will also be participating in many TTI data collection efforts including school age restraint use, child restraint use, and the evaluation component of the Texas Click it or Ticket campaign. Kelly can be reached at 979-845-9958 or k-wise@ttimail.tamu.edu.

**Melissa Lahey** is a recent graduate of Texas A&M University with a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science. Hailing from Kingwood, TX, Melissa is a Research Associate with the Behavioral Research Group. Melissa was previously employed with the Texas Engineering Extension Service as a student worker. She is currently working on projects related to “tween” passenger safety, and will be assisting this with observational restraint use surveys conducted by the Behavioral Research Group. Melissa can be reached at 979-845-0913 or m-lahey@ttimail.tamu.edu.

**Dr. Maury Dennis** joins the Center for Transportation Safety as a Senior Research Scientist. Dr. Dennis received his B.S. in Mathematics from Northwestern State College of Louisiana before completing his Master’s in Physical Education from the same school. Dr. Dennis was awarded his Ph.D. in Education with an emphasis in Traffic Safety and Physical Education by Florida State University. He joins the Center, having already spent over 30 years with Texas A&M University in a variety of capacities. Dr. Dennis has served as an administrator and curriculum developer for many drug and alcohol education-oriented programs. Maury can be reached at 979-845-9929 or at M-Dennis@ttimail.tamu.edu.

**Susan Brown** is new research associate for the Behavioral Research Group. She received her B.S. from Sam Houston State with a major in Psychology and a minor in General Business Administration. Susan is experienced in a variety of disciplines as well as public and private administration. She has seven years prior state service working for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Last fall Susan assessed the behaviors and knowledge Texas school age children require for safety, and cataloged similar past, present & future materials nationally. Currently she is contributing to the development, implementation and evaluation of the statewide K-8 traffic safety curricula. Susan’s participation in the Center’s Occupant Protection data collection will build her surveying speed and abilities for the new nighttime project beginning in Spring 08’. Her office is room 248 of the Gilchrest building and can be reached by phone at 979-458-2182 or at S-Brown@ttimail.tamu.edu.
Lee Ann Roman is an Assistant Research Specialist in the Planning/Evaluation Group working on impaired driving projects. Lee Ann holds a B.S. in Political Science and a Master’s in Urban Planning, both from Texas A&M University. Before joining TTI, she worked as a Planner for the City of Huntsville and before that had an eight year stint dispatching for law enforcement agencies. Lee Ann has always had an interest in law enforcement and believes her position at TTI, working on impaired driving, will enhance that interest. Lee Ann can be reached at 979-845-2736 or l-roman@ttimail.tamu.edu.