



Winter 2002-03



Iowa Department of Public Safety

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Iowa Traffic Fatalities Lowest Since End of World War II

*by Scott R. Falb, FARS Administrator
Iowa DOT*

Iowa traffic fatalities hit a 57-year low of 408 in 2002. Safety officials at the Iowa Department of Transportation predict the final count will be approximately 416 fatalities. If that is the final number, it will be 30 fatalities fewer than in 2001. The previous post-war low was 420 in 1984. Iowa hit its all-time high for fatalities at 912 in 1970.

State safety officials have noted that this drop is part of a long-term trend that began in 1974 with the advent of the first oil crisis and the beginning of the 55 mph national speed limit. Prior to that, Iowa traffic fatalities had been averaging in the middle to upper 800s. Following the change in speed limit, the average fatalities dropped into the 600s. Starting in 1982, the average number of fatalities dropped into the upper 400s. During the 1990s, the average fatalities dropped further to around 450 with four of the last five years fewer than 450.

Continued on page 2...

Iowa Seat Belt Use at 81%

Iowa motorists are buckling up at the rate of 82.35 percent according to a statewide survey conducted in 2002. That is up from 80.92 percent in 2001 and 78 percent in 2000. Robert Thompson, GTSB's program evaluator said the increase from 2001 to 2002 represents an additional 30,000 drivers wearing seat belts in Iowa.

The increase in seat belt use was seen most on Iowa's secondary roads where usage now averages 87 percent, up four percent from 2001.

Continued on page 3...

**sSTEP Waves
2003**

May 18 - June 2

July 2 - 8

August 25 - September 1

November 17 - December 1

Iowa seat belt use 81%

Goal by 2003 85%

Midwest ranking # 2

(Michigan is #1)

U.S. Ranking # 9

Calendar

March 25-27, 2002
Governor's Highway
Traffic Safety
Conference, Em-
bassy Suites, Des
Moines

**Traffic Safety
Recognition
Coffees:**

April 2:
Spencer 9:30 a.m.
Clear lake 2 p.m.

April 4:
Denison 9:30 a.m.
Ames 2 p.m.

April 7:
Red Oak 930 a.m.
Chariton 2 p.m.

April 8:
Mt Pleasant 930 a.m.
Iowa City 2 p.m.

April 9:
Oelwein 930 a.m.

May 18 - June 2:
sTEP Wave

Legislative Acts of
Interest to Law
Enforcement:

June 24:
Coralville

June 26:
Des Moines

July 2-8:
sTEP Wave

**August 25 - Septem-
ber 1:**
sTEP Wave

**November 17 -
December 1:**

Lowest Traffic Fatalities Since WW II

...Continued from page 1

Safety officials credit six major areas for the continuing decrease in traffic fatalities:

- Iowa passed a **Graduated Driver License** law, which created a new level of restricted license, resulting in a 20% decrease in traffic crashes and 47% decrease in traffic citations for 16 year olds.
- Iowa's **Administrative Revocation OWI** law, which assures the driving public that if a driver tests at .10 BAC or higher, that driver will lose his/her driver license no matter what happens in court. Since the rewrites of the OWI law in the early 1980s, the number of alcohol-related fatalities and the percentage of total fatalities that are alcohol-related have been cut in half. Iowa has the sixth lowest percentage of traffic fatalities that are alcohol-related in the nation and ranks number one in the Midwest.
- Iowa kept its top **speed limit** at 65 mph. Since the repeal of the National Maximum Speed Limit in 1995, Iowa's average annual traffic fatality number has continued to drop, while the average annual fatality numbers for states surrounding Iowa who raised their maximum speed limits have increased since they changed their laws.
- **Engineering improvements** in Iowa roadways have also played a role decreasing fatalities. Widening lanes, paving shoulders, and improving sight distances have helped make Iowa's roads more forgiving. The building of new four-lane divided express-ways which pull traffic off of less safe,

more crowded two lane highways has also helped in lowering traffic fatalities and will continue to help lower fatalities in the future.

- Iowa has a **primary seat belt law** that allows officers to stop motorists for the belt violation alone. A strong law, along with enforcement efforts, have helped push Iowa's seat belt usage to over 81%. Iowa ranks ninth in the nation in seat belt usage.
- Iowa has improved its **emergency response system** since the 1970s. Improvements in first response, the development and availability of lifesaving tools, the development of regional trauma centers and the proliferation of air ambulance capabilities have enhanced the survivability of serious crashes.

CrossRoads

Thomas J. Vilsack, Governor
Kevin Techau, Commissioner,
Iowa Department of Public Safety
J. Michael Laski, Director,
Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau
Mark J. Campbell, Editor
With assistance from Sandy Bennett,
Ihla Hochstetler, Lu Simpson, Bob
Thompson, Denny Becker & Shelley
DeForest.

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Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau
Wallace Bldg., 4th Floor
Des Moines IA 50319-0248
Phone: 515/281-3907
Fax: 515/281-6190
E-Mail: gtsbinfo@dps.state.ia.us

We welcome article submissions and ideas pertaining to traffic safety.

Visit our website at:
<http://dps.state.ia.us/gtsb/>

Study: Corridor and Cooperative Enforcement Raises Seat Belt Use!

by Bob Rushing,
Law Enforcement Liaison
GTSB



The officers that have been involved in multi-agency traffic enforcement projects around Iowa during the past several years have always done so believing that they made a difference. Law enforcement has joined together for many corridor projects in the hopes of correcting the poor behavior of some drivers and affirming the compliance already appreciated from the majority of the motoring public. City, county and state officers make the extra effort to coordinate enforcement activities by targeting a roadway thereby demonstrating to the motorists that law enforcement is united in the effort to save lives and prevent injuries. Now, those officers' beliefs have been affirmed through a third party evaluation process.

The Preusser Research Group, a leading traffic safety consultant, was commissioned by NHTSA to observe,

Surveys	% Drivers	% Passengers
Pre	78.3	79.4
During	84.2	87.3
Post	83.1	85.2
Surveys	US-20 Drivers	US-30 Passengers
Pre	79.7	76.9
During	86.4	82.1
Post	83.6	82.6
Total for all sets of observations		
	Drivers	Passengers
	83.2	80.5

measure and evaluate the seat belt use of motorists along a route that was to be targeted for one of Iowa's corridor enforcement events. This particular project was the US 20 and US 30 event held October 17,

2002. The preview of the process included several on-site observations of motorists traveling these routes and a survey of their then seat belt use. This was recorded and is displayed in the left column.

Next, the same locations were observed during the enforcement activity of October 17. As expected, the seat belt use rate was elevated in comparison to the pre-event survey.

Again the seat belt use was observed several days following the enforcement blitz. These post event usage rates were expectedly slightly lower than those recorded during the very visible enforcement. However, more important, the residual positive effect was realized, in that the post-event habit was observed to be of a much higher use, from four to six percentage points increase on the two roadways. This translates into several thousand more belted drivers and could be expected to result in many persons being saved from death or severe injuries, if involved in a traffic crash.

Multi-agency traffic enforcement works. It is noticed by the public we serve. The effects have been verified. Iowa again is recognized for its leadership role in traffic safety.

Iowa's Seat Belt Use Hits 82%

...Continued from page 1

Primary roads remained unchanged at 83 percent while interstate seat belt use declined slightly and was recorded at 81 percent, down fractionally from 2001. While municipal roads still have the lowest seat belt use rates, they recorded a three percent increase from 2001 and are now at 79 percent.

The survey was conducted in September and October, 2002, by the Iowa State Patrol in cooperation with the Iowa DOT's Office of Driver Services at 100 sites in Iowa. The next surveys will be conducted in April and June, 2003.

Traffic Enforcement and Drug Trafficking

What does traffic enforcement have to do with the battle against drugs? The answer may be found in Iowa State Patrol's District 3 in southwest Iowa. Over a two-month period, December, 2002, and January, 2003, several troopers patrolling Interstate 80 made a series of traffic stops that resulted in seizures of drugs and cash. The stops included speeding, seat belt, tinted windows and display of license plate violations.

The troopers made the stops, issued the citations or warnings, and in the course of the stops engaged the drivers and passengers in conversation. If they became nervous or their stories did not make sense, the troopers became suspicious. Of course the troopers were paying attention to odors, speech problems and other indicators pointing to impairment. If the trooper was still suspicious of illegal activity and after issuing the warning or

citation, the trooper would tell the subjects they were free to leave. The trooper then asked for consent to search the car and usually consent was given by the motorist. If the motorist refused the trooper had the option of calling for a canine unit to "sniff" the vehicle.

Trooper Hitchcock is a canine officer but if he is not available the troopers ask for help from a Douglas County Nebraska canine officer.

Lt. Mike Metzger is the commander of ISP District and is proud of the activity. He said the traffic stop is key to the drug or cash seizures.

Others Districts Active, too

District 3 is not the only patrol district that "hits" on drugs. In early December, a trooper near Mason City stopped a speeder and found more than 34 pounds of methamphetamine. Another trooper near Cedar Falls stopped a vehicle for tinted

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A 2-Month Sample of Activity by Troopers in SW Iowa

PC: Tinted window, display of plates, seat belt.
Result: \$192,490 cash locked in trunk, marijuana

PC: Speeding, seat belt, display of plates, following too closely
Result: 24 lbs marijuana

PC: Speeding
Result: 60 lbs marijuana

PC: Following too closely
Result: \$34,000 cash

PC: Speeding, no drivers license
Result: 5 lbs marijuana

PC: Speeding, seat belt, tinted windows
Result: 66 lbs marijuana, \$2,700 cash

PC: Speeding, following too closely
Result: 116 lbs marijuana, drug paraphernalia

PC: Speeding, tinted windows, no front license plate
Result: 31 lbs cocaine

PC: Speeding
Result: 37 lbs cocaine in bricks, 2.2 lbs methamphetamine

PC: Speeding
Result: \$16,600 cash

PC: Public reports of erratic driving, possible impaired drive, speeding 90 in a 55 mph zone
Result: OWI, possession of a controlled substance (marijuana), possession of drug paraphernalia

PC: Tinted windows, display of plates, seat belt
Result: \$194,600 cash, quantity of marijuana

PC= Probable Cause

Following is the text of one of the reports as written by the investigating trooper:

"I did request permission to search the vehicle, which was denied by the female driver. I asked the male passenger for permission to search the vehicle; he too declined. I then specifically asked him again if he had any illegal drugs, specifically marijuana. He then handed me, from his coat, approximately 2 grams of marijuana wrapped in a cellophane cigarette wrapper. I then advised him that I had probable cause to search the vehicle because he was in possession of an illegal substance. Probable cause search did produce, in a suitcase, 5 one-pound bags of marijuana. The subjects were traveling from Las Vegas to Detroit. The male passenger advised that the marijuana was his and that he had purchased it to get out of a financial bind and was attempting to double his money in Detroit."

Traffic Enforcement and Drug Trafficking

...Continued from page 4.

windows and charged the driver with driving while barred and suspended, possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia.

In central Iowa a trooper stopped a speeder and found \$344,897 in cash a hidden compartment. Another trooper stopped a car for speeding and confiscated \$101,160 cash along with a controlled substance.

What Happens to the Cash?

What happens with the cash that is seized in a traffic stop? According to Kevin Struve, assistant Iowa attorney general, the state follows legal procedures. Following a forfeiture proceeding, in which the seizure must have a connection to illegal activity or to facilitate a crime. All forfeited property goes to the Iowa Attorney General's office. A written policy addresses how the funds are split. The AG's office retains 10 percent and 90 percent is returned to the seizing agencies. The funds are to be used to enhance or supplement law enforcement. The funds cannot supplant or replace normally budgeted items including carpeting or artwork. They can buy equipment or tools that an agency normally would not buy such as special training. Struve said there are different rules for vehicle and real estate.

Do you have an item of interest, an anecdote or a good story related to traffic enforcement?

Feel free to submit it to CrossRoads. Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau
Wallace State Office Building 4th Floor
Des Moines IA 50319-0248
or send an e-mail message to:
gtsbinfo@dps.state.ia.us

Not all of the stops result in drug or cash seizures.

Polk County

A Des Moines area trooper stopped a vehicle for speeding 114 mph in a 65 mph zone. The driver did not stop and a pursuit ensued. Besides numerous traffic charges as a result of the pursuit, the trooper found three minor children in the car. The driver was also charged with three counts of child endangerment.

Scott County

From Sgt. John Marxen, Scott County SO:

I stopped a 54-year old woman for speeding 55 mph in a 35 mph zone. She was driving a 1987 Mustang GT. When I told her speed she became irate, pointed at her instrument panel and yelled, "I was going 35. My speedometer read 35 the whole time."

As she continued to argue and point, I looked at her instrument panel and said, "Ma'am, that's your tachometer, not your speedometer."

She asked, "What's that?"

I told her that means if she was trying to drive 55 mph and was reading the tach, her car would have blown up. I explained the purpose of the tach and issued the citation. She wasn't upset about the ticket but informed me she would file a complaint with Ford Motor Co. for putting tachometers next to speedometers.

Eastern Iowa

Scott Falb of the Iowa DOT said a driver in eastern Iowa rolled his car several times and it came to rest on its top. Even though he was upside-down, the man was spared injuries as he was safely secured in his seat belt.

Investigating officers charged the man with failure to have his vehicle under control and driving while barred.

Newly Elected County Attorneys Support Seat Belt Use



The November elections saw the election of 11 new county attorneys. The group attended the New Prosecutors Course sponsored by the Prosecuting Attorney Training Coordinator. They all received complimentary "Buckle Up" t-shirts. Pictured are: Bruce Swanson, Montgomery County, Karen Kaufman, Hancock County, Jeff Millhollin, Adams County, Jennifer Miller, Marshall County, Gary Allison, Muscatine County, Mari Prier, Mills County, Jeff Greve, Worth County, Elisabeth Reynoldson, Clarke County, Matt Wilber, Pottawattamie County, and Gina Vosburg, Wright County. Not pictured is Pat Wegman, Chickasaw County.

A Seat Belt Testimonial

I feel obligated to inform you of a recent accident I was in. I was traveling east on Interstate 80 just outside Joliet, Ill when a minivan pulled down into the grassy median. I slowed down slightly expecting the minivan to stop and complete an illegal U-turn. Instead the vehicle continued at us and hit us at a fairly high rate of speed. Due to some luck, the grace of God, wearing my seat belt and despite getting hit and spun around, it appears my brother and I received only minor injuries. I am a firm believer in the wearing of a seat belt now more than ever cause it saved a lot of potential injuries we could have suffered.

I am volunteering to tell my story or let you use the story to help the cause! Thank you again!

Mike Payne
1402 32nd St NE, C-3
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

sSTEP in 2003

*by Trooper Adam Buck
and Lu Simpson, GTSB*

Iowa's special Traffic Enforcement Program (sSTEP) includes more law enforcement agencies than ever in 2003. The sSTEP mission is to increase public awareness and compliance with motor vehicle laws. Each agency can customize the program that best uses its resources and most effectively addresses its traffic safety problems in a proactive approach.

In FFY 2003, agencies were asked to provide extra traffic enforcement during six waves throughout the year in conjunction with national campaigns.

Each department conducts observational seat belt surveys before and after the enforcement period in order to monitor the effects of extra enforcement.

Participating agencies tell the public of program activities via local media as a way of encouraging long term compliance with traffic laws. While some departments participate voluntarily with the use of officers on regular shifts, many of Iowa's sSTEP participants use federal highway safety funds for overtime or equipment that contributes to the sSTEP objective of reducing the likelihood of traffic crashes that result in injury and death.

The next sSTEP wave is scheduled for May 18 - June 2, in conjunction with Operation America Buckles-Up Children, a national mobilization that encourages proper use of safety restraint systems for children. There are several phases to this wave that have not been implemented in Iowa before. Before and during the enforcement segment of the wave there will be a federally funded paid and earned media ads. The actual enforcement period of the wave will be two-weeks long, the first time a two week long enforcement period has been planned as part of sSTEP since its inception.

In order to evaluate the changes, both pre and post statewide seat belt surveys will be made during the May wave.

SMS Funds School Bus Passing Violations Study

With the help of Iowa SMS funding, The Iowa Department of Education and several local school systems collaborated to use video camera technology in a pilot study of stop arm passing violations during the 2001-2002 school year. The multi-



discipline study and public education efforts included local pupil transportation drivers and administrators, parents, law courts, and media.

Iowa Code Section 321.372 states that vehicles meeting or overtaking a school bus “shall bring the vehicle to a complete stop” when the school bus is receiving or discharging pupils as indicated by its flashing warning lights and extended stop arm.

Vehicles passing school buses with their red warning lights flashing and stop arms extended are in violation of the law. Some of these violations do not lead to convictions because when a school bus driver reports a violation it is the school bus driver’s word against the driver of the vehicle, says Bradley Howe, Spencer city attorney. “Quite often, this results in a reasonable doubt and an acquittal,” he said.

The SMS pilot study was conducted on selected bus routes in several Iowa communities and produced a number of benefits that were captured in the Spencer study:

- ◆ The video tape recording provided police with a more accurate, information on the stop arm extension, and more detailed, and less refutable descriptions of the vehicles in question. “The camera system is one of the most reliable and objective means of recording such violations,” said Chief Michael Lashbrook, Spencer PD.

- ◆ “The video from the camera, on occasion, saved time and money for trial by allowing the violator to view the tape,” said Lashbrook. “Once they see the video they come to realize the substantive nature of the evidence and will often plead to the ticket.”

- ◆ “During the time that stop arm video cameras were installed on the school buses, I did not lose one single case,” said Bradley Howe, Spencer city attorney. “Several people came into court to dispute the tickets, and once the Judge saw the videotape, a conviction resulted.”

- ◆ Public awareness grew as the local newspaper and radio stations ran interviews and announcements related to the study. Public awareness itself “led to a noticeable decline in violations,” reported Daniel Schultz, Spencer Community School District.

- ◆ One very positive but unexpected benefit was that the study brought to the attention of the school district improvements that could be made to the bus route and stop locations. For instance, bus stops located soon after a corner had increased violations because vehicles did not have sufficient notice; moving the stops further down the block eliminated a significant portion of the violations.

Local SMS Groups:

Dubuque County:

10:30 a.m., Every sixth Friday. Contact: Lt. Scott Crabill 563/589-4425.

Polk County:

1:30 p.m., second Tuesday of each month. Contact: Cy Quick 515/225-2349.

Scott County: CARS):

10 a.m., third Wednesday of each month. Contact: Sgt. John Marxen 563/326-8628.

Pottawattamie County (SWIFT):

Meetings vary. Check www.cbtraffic.net Contact: Blake Redfield 712/328-4645.

Iowa's Strategic Highway Safety Plan web site:
www.iowaSMS.org

For other SMS information, contact Mary Stahlhut, 515/239-1169. E-mail: Mary.Stahlhut@dot.state.ia.us

Seat Belt Awards

Cities of Marquette McGregor: 80%



The cities of Marquette and McGregor were awarded the GTSB/NHTSA 80 percent Safety Belt Honor Roll plaque. Trooper Adam Buck presented the plaque at a meeting of the Mar-Mac Police Commission. Pictured are Harold Brooks, Mayor of McGregor, Cathy Carpian, Commission Chair, Chief Randall Grady, Mar-Mac PD, Norma Mason, Vice President of the Commission, and Robyn Denning, Commission member.

Changing of the Guard



J. Michael Laski, is the recently elected vice president of the Iowa Traffic Control and Safety Association. Laski, right, presents Duane Smith, immediate past president of ITCSA, with a plaque signifying the group's appreciation for Smith's contributions. Laski is the Director of the GTSB and Smith is Associate Director for Outreach, Center for Transportation Research and Education at Iowa State University.

Life Toll
 (lives saved by the belt since July, 1986)

YTD 2003	42
Grand Total	4,982

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 Wallace State Office Building 4th Floor
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