



THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

# STATEWIDE TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT PLAN





## Introduction

**T**hroughout the United States, Federal, State, county, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies are tasked with enhancing the quality of life for citizens by providing high-quality professional services, by enforcing laws, and by upholding U.S., State, and local Constitutions. It is the goal of every law enforcement agency to ensure that the members of the public it serves feel safe in their homes, in their neighborhoods, and wherever they may travel.

Responding to calls for service, investigating crimes, providing support services, and traffic enforcement are but a few of the many responsibilities of law enforcement agency administrators. The proper allocation of resources to fulfill the needs of the community is a necessary administrative component. Likewise, tasks must be prioritized according to current tendencies in society.

Statistical data shows that when it comes to the realm of law enforcement, people are more likely to be injured or killed as the result of a motor vehicle crash than as a result of crime. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people age 3 to 33.<sup>i</sup> During 2001, motor vehicle crashes and homicides, broken down by race, had the following ranks among all causes of death:<sup>ii</sup>

### Rankings of Deaths by Motor Vehicle Crash and Homicide, 2001

	White	Black	American Indian	Asian or Pacific Islander
<b>Motor Vehicle Crash</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Homicide</b>	19 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>

This is a trend that can be observed at all jurisdictional levels. Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death and injury and result in greater economic losses to society than violent crime. Law enforcement agencies must recognize that traffic enforcement is a critical component of its mission of keeping citizens safe.

The mission of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes through education, research, safety standards, and enforcement activity. The agency develops, promotes, and implements effective educational, engineering, and enforcement programs to end preventable tragedies and reduce economic costs associated with vehicle use and highway travel.

This document will serve as NHTSA's guidelines to States for developing a comprehensive statewide traffic law enforcement plan. The guidelines present a framework under which a State, through its law enforcement agencies and partners, may better enhance its traffic enforcement initiatives and thereby reduce the number of fatalities, injuries, and associated economic losses caused by motor vehicle crashes. This guideline discusses planning and coordination, data collection, implementation, evaluation, high-visibility enforcement, marketing, training, and prosecutor and judicial support.

## Preface

**T**raffic law enforcement is not a stand-alone activity. To be effective, comprehensive traffic enforcement should have a high degree of **coordination, be supported by data collection and analysis, be implemented according to threats identified by data, and should be evaluated for effectiveness.** To be successful, traffic enforcement must **be highly visible and sustained, must be supported by adequate training, must incorporate marketing initiatives, should address nationally identified issues of impaired driving and occupant protection, and must be supported by prosecutors and the courts.**

Traffic enforcement seeks to generate a general deterrence effect on motorists. General deterrence is based on the driving public's perception of being cited or arrested for a traffic violation. If enough potential violators believe there is a strong probability they will be caught, some of them will avoid committing traffic offenses, at least some of the time. The overall goal is to increase compliance by motorists to traffic laws, resulting in reduced vehicle crashes.

State, county, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies should establish traffic enforcement as a priority within their total enforcement programs. A traffic enforcement program should be built on a foundation of commitment, coordination, planning, monitoring, and evaluation. To achieve these objectives, State, county, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies should:

- provide the public with a high-quality, effective traffic enforcement system and have enabling legislation and regulations in place to implement traffic enforcement functions;
- develop and implement a comprehensive enforcement plan for impaired driving involving alcohol or other drugs, safety belt use and child passenger safety laws, aggressive driving, speeding, and other hazardous moving violations. The plan should, through data collection, systematically identify problem areas, both behavioral and geographical, and initiate countermeasures to mitigate the problem;
- develop a cooperative working relationship with other State, county, and local governmental agencies and community organizations on traffic safety issues;
- issue and enforce policies on roadside sobriety checkpoints, saturation patrols, safety belt use, pursuit driving, crash investigation and reporting, speed enforcement, and serious traffic violations; and
- develop performance measures for traffic enforcement that are both qualitative and quantitative.

## Planning and Coordination

**C**entralized program planning, implementation, and coordination are essential for achieving and sustaining effective statewide traffic enforcement programs. Programs should use a bottom-up approach to statewide traffic safety programming aimed at mitigating specific traffic-related problems at the local level. Incorporating those issues into a statewide plan is an effective means of coordination. Traffic crashes are local events, and the strategies and interventions employed to mitigate them should be implemented at the local level. As traffic related problems vary with location, a comprehensive traffic safety program, which is customized to address the local conditions, will be optimally effective at reducing motor vehicle crashes statewide.

Every State has appointed a Governor's Representative (GR) to facilitate the State's Highway Safety Plan through each State's Highway Safety Office (SHSO). The GR's are coordinated nationally by the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)<sup>iii</sup>. To maximize statewide program impact on local jurisdiction issues, the SHSO, with the endorsement of the GR, should partner with State, county, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to ensure that planning and coordinating functions are performed efficiently and compliment the State's traffic enforcement program. These partnerships are best fostered through the development of traffic enforcement committees, facilitated by the SHSO, that include law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and courts (when possible), citizen groups, and traffic safety advocate groups. Traffic engineering representatives at the State, county, local, and tribal level should be included. In carrying out its responsibility of centralized program planning and coordination, the SHSO should:

- provide leadership, training, and technical assistance to State, county, and local law enforcement agencies;
- coordinate traffic enforcement and other traffic safety program areas including:
  - support for mobilization initiatives for occupant protection, impaired driving, aggressive driving, etc. NHTSA and other State, county, local, and tribal agencies support and facilitate numerous traffic enforcement mobilizations during the year. Local agencies should incorporate these mobilizations into their overall traffic law enforcement plans, particularly when addressing specific problems, with coordination of the SHSO to maximize continuity throughout the State;
- develop and implement a comprehensive plan for all traffic enforcement activities, in cooperation with law enforcement leaders. In order to maximize effectiveness, the plan should support initiatives at the local level and coordinate those initiatives statewide;
- generate broad-based support for enforcement programs; and
- integrate traffic enforcement into community/corridor traffic safety and other injury prevention programs.

## Data Collection and Analysis

**T**he collection and analysis of valid data is critical to any approach intended to increase the level of highway safety and subsequently decrease the incidents of vehicle crashes. In creating effective interventions that support traffic enforcement functions, a founding principle mandates the collection and analysis of data to identify opportunities for change and to support specific enforcement initiatives. An effective data collection system provides accurate, timely information to field personnel who are performing primary traffic functions, and to management for decision making. Data is usually collected from crash reports, daily officer activity reports that contain workload and citation information, highway department records (e.g., traffic volume), citizen complaints, and officer observations. An effective records program should:

- provide information rapidly and accurately;
- provide information that is relevant to the program tasks;
- provide routine compilations of data for management use in the decision making process;
- provide data for operational planning and execution;
- interface with a variety of data systems, including statewide traffic safety records systems;
- be accessible to enforcement, planners, and management; and
- should contain mechanisms to integrate, in a timely manner, local jurisdiction data into the State enforcement program.

Data should be analyzed to target specific problems at the local level and should be shared with statewide law enforcement partners, through the SHSO, resulting in enhancement of projects in adjacent jurisdictions. This will produce greater effectiveness in areas contending with similar problems. Law enforcement administrators should use data to immediately address issues and problems.

## Implementation

**S**tates, through SHSOs, should encourage law enforcement agencies to develop and maintain comprehensive resource management plans, which identify and implement resources needed to effectively support enforcement programs. The resource management plans should include a specific component on traffic enforcement and safety, integrating those initiatives into a total agency enforcement program. Law enforcement agencies should conduct assessments of service demands and resources and re-allocate those resources to address specific traffic safety problems at the local level. Implementation of traffic law enforcement programs, in response to data analysis, should be systematic and maintained until the problem is alleviated.

Implementation of traffic law enforcement projects should be shared with the SHSO and surrounding agencies to enhance mitigation of similar problems in those areas. The plan should be defined in terms of budget requirements and services to be provided. Integration of marketing, (including both paid and earned media), education and sustained high-visibility enforcement, based on data analysis, has proven to be an effective countermeasure to locations with high incidents of crashes in local areas.

National mobilizations and crackdowns occur twice yearly, focusing on impaired driving and occupant protection. In any statewide enforcement plan, the mobilizations and crackdowns should be part of the plan, in addition to any other special enforcement efforts that are to be conducted on the State and local level. Information on the mobilizations and crackdowns may be obtained from the NHTSA Web sites [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov) or [www.stopimpaireddriving.org](http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org).

Traffic law enforcement projects should be implemented with consideration to officer safety. Project development should ensure that sufficient training and adequate resources and equipment are provided so law enforcement officers can perform their duties in the safest possible manner.

## Evaluation

**S**tate, county, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies should develop a comprehensive evaluation program to measure progress toward established project goals and objectives, effectively plan and implement traffic enforcement programs, optimize the allocation of limited resources, measure the impact of traffic enforcement on reducing crime and traffic crashes, fatalities, and injuries, and compare costs of criminal activity to costs of traffic crashes. Evaluation of traffic enforcement programs should occur first at the local level and then be compiled into a statewide evaluation process. This type of evaluation will better enable the State to identify and mitigate obstacles and weaknesses.

Law enforcement managers should:

- include evaluation in initial program planning efforts to ensure that data will be available and that sufficient resources will be allocated;
- report results regularly to the SHSO, project and program managers, to police field commanders and officers, and to the public and private sectors;
- use results to guide future activities and to assist in justifying resources to legislative bodies;
- conduct surveys to assist in determining program effectiveness, such as roadside sobriety surveys, speed surveys, license checks, belt use surveys, and surveys measuring public knowledge and attitudes about traffic enforcement programs; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of services provided in support of priority traffic safety areas.



## Highly Visible and Sustained Enforcement

**G**eneral deterrence forms a perception that violating traffic laws will result in being cited or arrested. The most efficient way to foster the general deterrence perception is for the driving public to regularly see ongoing law enforcement activities. State, county, local, and tribal law enforcement executives should promote an organizational culture to encourage officers to stop motorists for all violations. The SHSO should continually support and encourage local agencies sustaining this concept. Maximum exposure can be achieved through sobriety and safety belt checkpoints, saturation patrols, and by encouraging aggressive traffic enforcement by all law enforcement officers. Cultural changes in a law enforcement agency towards sustained and aggressive traffic enforcement will facilitate general deterrence across jurisdictional borders and reduce motor vehicle crashes. It is important to remember that your marketing strategy should be used when conducting high-visibility and sustained enforcement. Communication with the public on these efforts is a part of general deterrence.

States should encourage local agencies to develop and staff dedicated traffic enforcement units. When staffing dedicated traffic enforcement units, local agencies should allocate sufficient personnel resources to make an effective and sustained impact on identified traffic safety issues.

## Training

**T**raining is essential in supporting the special requirements of traffic law enforcement and safety. Operational personnel should be trained in the technical and societal issues relating to contemporary traffic safety issues, to be prepared to effectively perform their duties. Traffic enforcement training is available through a variety of resources including law enforcement agencies, the State POST (Police, or Peace, Officer Standards and Training) agency, Federal agencies, or a commercial training business.

Training accomplishes important and necessary goals. Proper training should:

- prepare officers to act decisively and correctly;
- increase compliance with agency enforcement goals;
- assist in meeting priorities;
- improve compliance with established policies;
- result in greater productivity and effectiveness;
- foster cooperation and unity of purpose;
- help offset liability actions; and
- motivate and enhance officer professionalism.

State, county, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies should:

- periodically assess enforcement activities to determine training needs;
- provide traffic enforcement knowledge and skills to all newly hired law enforcement officers including the use of prosecutors;
- provide traffic enforcement in-service training to officers;
- conduct training to implement specialized traffic enforcement skills, techniques, or programs;
- train instructors to increase agency capabilities and to ensure continuity of specialized enforcement skills and techniques; and
- integrate specialized training, to the extent possible, to traffic enforcement officers in such areas as commercial motor vehicle inspection, crash investigation and reconstruction, and speed-measuring devices.

As impaired driving has been identified as a significant traffic safety threat, at all jurisdictional levels throughout the Nation, adequate training for impaired driving detection and prosecution is imperative. States should support training for all traffic law enforcement officers in the NHTSA/IACP Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST) course. Where possible, drug-impaired-driving programs, such as the Drug Evaluation and Classification (DEC) program and Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) training, should be incorporated into traffic enforcement programs.

It is recommended that the State SFST and DRE coordinators conduct an inventory of officers who will be participating in any traffic enforcement activity to determine their training level. All training and certifications should be up-to-date with current information. This would include:

- speed measurement certification(s);
- SFST training;
- DRE training;
- breath-testing instrument training and certification; and
- crash reconstruction.

## Communications

**C**ommunication in combination with traffic law enforcement creates a synergistic effect on traffic safety that neither could achieve singularly. States should incorporate a communication plan into their enforcement strategies in concert with the national communication plans. Local agencies, in combating local issues, should incorporate traffic enforcement countermeasures in cooperation with national and State media mobilizations and crackdowns.

Large-scale communication programs may be cost-prohibitive for local agencies. States should therefore base their strategies on traffic safety problems that occur consistently across local jurisdictional borders. Local law enforcement agencies should support their traffic safety programs through earned media and public relations.

Communication should be based on year-round integrated activities that build upon, leverage, and maximize the impact of pre-existing enforcement and advertising campaigns.<sup>iv</sup> Mobilization and crackdown media blitzes increase public awareness that stepped-up enforcement is taking place and is effective in changing behavior. However, a year-round integrated communications plan, including a full range of communications, will assist in preventing significant drop-off in awareness long after the blitz is completed. A State's communication program should be implemented under two fundamental principles: first, identify the policy and program requiring support, and second, identify the audience through data.<sup>v</sup>

The SHSO, in cooperation with law enforcement agencies, should develop a statewide communications plan that:

- identifies and targets specific audiences, based on State fatality and other data;
- addresses contemporary issues including enforcement of safety belt use and child passenger safety, impaired driving involving alcohol or other drugs, speed, and other serious traffic violations;
- capitalizes on national mobilizations and crackdowns, such as *Click It or Ticket*, *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.*, *Buckle Up America*, *Operation CARE*, and *Child Passenger Safety Awareness* campaigns
- identifies and supports the efforts of traffic safety activist groups and the health and medical community to gain increased support of and attention to traffic safety and enforcement;
- uses national themes, events, and material; and
- motivates the public to support increased enforcement of traffic laws.

## Prosecutor and Judicial Support

**W**ith all of the enforcement efforts, it should not be forgotten that the chief law enforcement officer in most jurisdictions is the local prosecutor. With this in mind, it is imperative that the attorney general, or the State equivalent, should be a party to any statewide enforcement effort. This will ensure that many of the law enforcement plans are consistent with current laws and regulations regarding traffic enforcement. The local prosecutor should be made aware of all law enforcement plans to ensure consistency with Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. This facilitates a better working relationship with the prosecutors and negates potential problems in the prosecution of impaired-driving cases.

The involvement of prosecutors in comprehensive planning, training, and marketing ensures increased success when the cases are brought to trial and reduces the potential for dismissal of cases based on procedural errors, training, and jurisdictional issues. It also promotes and fosters teamwork with the criminal justice system, thereby reducing the “us versus them” mentality between law enforcement officers and prosecutors. Further, by involving prosecutors (and the defense bar) in the training of law enforcement officers will result in enhancements in submission of unobjectionable evidence to the court. Chief prosecutors can also be useful in the marketing of a deterrence strategy, as they are elected officials and may wish to publicly emphasize public safety.

The SHSOs should be cognizant of training needs for prosecutors in the area of traffic enforcement, especially in the area of impaired driving. Due to the high turnover rate within many prosecutor offices, this training should be conducted as frequently as possible and efforts should be made to ensure continuity of specialized prosecution skills and techniques. Additional resources such as Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors (TSRPs) who are experienced prosecutors within a State provide the specialized expertise needed for local prosecutors and have access to national resources. For more information see [www.napcsite.org](http://www.napcsite.org) or [www.ndaa-apri.org](http://www.ndaa-apri.org).

From a judicial perspective, the judges and court administrators should be notified of mobilization and crackdowns, so they are aware of any potential docketing issues. In addition, the judiciary must be prepared to act on all cases brought before it and in most cases it will be the specialized courts that hear the traffic cases.

All SHSOs should be aware of the judicial education opportunities that are available to the judiciary and be prepared to provide the means to accomplish the agency's goals in saving lives and preventing injuries. Additional information may be obtained from [www.judges.org](http://www.judges.org) or [www.ncsconline.org](http://www.ncsconline.org).

## Conclusion

**A** coordinated, data-driven, properly implemented and evaluated enforcement plan that incorporates training, marketing, national issues, and prosecutorial support has great potential to be effective in raising the deterrence effect on motorists at local and State levels. Effective enforcement is one component of a successful traffic safety program. However, traffic enforcement alone is not a panacea for all traffic safety issues. Enforcement must be integrated into a comprehensive traffic safety management system that goes beyond general deterrence and seeks changes to societal values.

## References

<sup>i</sup>US DOT NHTSA, Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes as a Leading Cause of Death in the United States, 2001, Rajesh Subramanian, DOT HS 809 695

<sup>ii</sup>National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 52, No. 9 Table E. Deaths and percentage of total deaths for the 10 leading causes by race, United States, 2001, available at [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr52/nvsr52\\_13.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr52/nvsr52_13.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup>GHSA Membership List, available at [www.statehighwaysafety.org/html/membership/GRCoordinatorsGeneric.pdf](http://www.statehighwaysafety.org/html/membership/GRCoordinatorsGeneric.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Communications Plan 2005, available at [nhtsa.gov/people/injury/NewmediaForumWeb/MediaForumPlanner/images/CommPlanBook.pdf](http://nhtsa.gov/people/injury/NewmediaForumWeb/MediaForumPlanner/images/CommPlanBook.pdf)

<sup>v</sup>National Media Forum on Highway Safety, NHTSA, Nov. 2004, available at [nhtsa.gov/people/injury/NewmediaForumWeb/images/Alice.pdf](http://nhtsa.gov/people/injury/NewmediaForumWeb/images/Alice.pdf)







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