RSA

Newsletter

Safe Roads for a Safer Future
Investment in roadway safety saves lives

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

In This Issue

Happy New Year!

By Becky Crowe, RSA Program Manager
FHWA Office of Safety

At the Transportation Research Board (TRB) meeting in Washington, D.C. in January, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives from across the nation. I was so excited to hear about the MAJOR reductions in fatalities and injuries being reported for 2008. For example, the Commonwealth of Virginia shows a reduction in fatalities by 207. The Virginia Highway Safety Office reported 819 deaths in 2008, which are a sharp contrast to the 1,026 people who lost their lives on Virginia roadways in 2007. According to the Virginia State Police, this is the first time in 16 years that traffic fatalities have declined so drastically. Please take a minute to consider that over 200 people made it home safely (in Virginia) and had the opportunity to celebrate the new year!

We hope you enjoy the Winter version of the RSA Newsletter, which provides an update of new RSA resources. Please continue to use or consider using Road Safety Audits as a tool to CONTINUE to reduce and eliminate injuries and fatalities that occur on your roadways in 2009. As always, please contact us if we can assist you in any way!

RSA Snapshots

RSA Snapshots highlight various RSA programs across the US.

The Tennessee DOT (TDOT) is now conducting RSAs on projects in the State's Ramp Queue Program, which will identify safety improvements at interchange ramps. This includes performing RSAs on various ramps that have both safety and congestion issues with a focus on the intersection and other intersections up and down stream. The purpose of the program is to prevent rear-end collisions and also mitigate congestion. TDOT will conduct RSAs at eight (8) locations this year.

For more information on Tennessee's work on RSAs, please contact Jessica Rich, Safety Engineer at the FHWA Tennessee Division office, at (615) 781-5788 or Jessica.Rich@dot.gov.

The RSA software was finalized and posted on the FHWA RSA website.

The Office of Safety Programs and Highways for LIFE conducted an RSA webinar on November 12, 2008. Right click **here** to download a recording of the webinar.

The Tribal RSA Case Studies were released.

Rebecca Crowe and Heather Rigdon Presented a paper titled Recent Uses of Road Safety Audits (RSAs) in Highway Safety Improvement Programs and Strategic Highway Safety Plans written by FHWA and SAIC at the TRB Annual Conference in January 2009.

Submitted by Mario Dupigny-Giroux, VAOT Traffic Safety Engineer

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VAOT) has been conducting Road Safety Audits (RSA) with the involvement of the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) since 2000. The role of the RPCs is to bring together local entities and community members and to facilitate the exchange of information and the sharing of concerns with the audit teams. VAOT's audit teams have been typically formed with VAOT and FHWA staff.
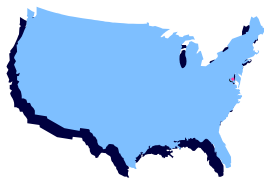
In recent years, the RSA program has been concentrating on the review of roads eligible for the High Risk Rural Roads Program (HRRR). Under the HRRR program, twenty-two RSAs were performed in 2007 and thirty more were accomplished in 2008 at intersections or sections of roads of no more than one mile in length. The HRRR sites reviewed were prioritized by the RPCs from their analysis of the crash data and the results of discussions with towns, EMS providers and police officers.

The towns selected were given small grants to accomplish recommendations of the audit teams. Towns were not obliged to implement any of the recommendations, but were expected to provide a written response to explain why they preferred not to implement a remedial action.

The most common actions proposed by the audit teams included the installation or the improvement of signs and pavement markings. The removal of roadside obstacles, the installation of guardrail and the realignment of intersection approaches within the current roadway surface (e.g., by removing some pavements) were other typical actions suggested through the RSA process. Several improvements are to be completed by November 2009.

Towns have been appreciative of the help that they received from this process. One town wrote "please relay to everyone our appreciation for the help our town received with this intersection. Just having the help to see what we were missing was wonderful and we plan on using some of the simple suggestions made during the site visit on other spots in town".

If you would like additional information on the Vermont AOT RSA program please contact Mario Dupigny-Giroux, PE, Traffic Safety Engineer, at (802) 828-0169 (phone) or mario.dupigny-giroux@state.vt.us.

To submit your program for RSA Snapshots, please email Eloisa.Raynault@dot.gov or Heather.M.Rigdon@saic.com.

RSA Software Finalized and Now Available

The RSA software is now available for download from the FHWA RSA website. Prompt lists are one of the tools used in conducting Road Safety Audits (RSAs) and they can be used by RSA team members to think about broader issues during the safety performance examination. There are, however, some challenges in using RSA prompt lists in that there is the potential to "tick" the box instead of using the prompt lists as an aid for the application of knowledge and experience of the auditors. Another concern is that the use of high-level, broad prompt lists deprives the auditors of sufficient detail that might be needed. The FHWA Road Safety Audit (RSA) Software was developed to address these challenges and to support the practical implementation of the FHWA RSA Guidelines.

RSA Software is not just a mere automation of RSA prompt lists – it is intended to be a guiding and process tracking tool enabling the use of RSA prompt lists at a variety of detail levels, while providing a way to accompany each safety issue raised with a discussion and assessment. Using the software helps auditors to think about and justify their findings. The software assists in drafting RSA reports, enables users to record safety issues both by prompt list topic and by location, helps verify issues and locations entered, and can be used in RSA training.

To download the software, click on this link: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/rsa/software/
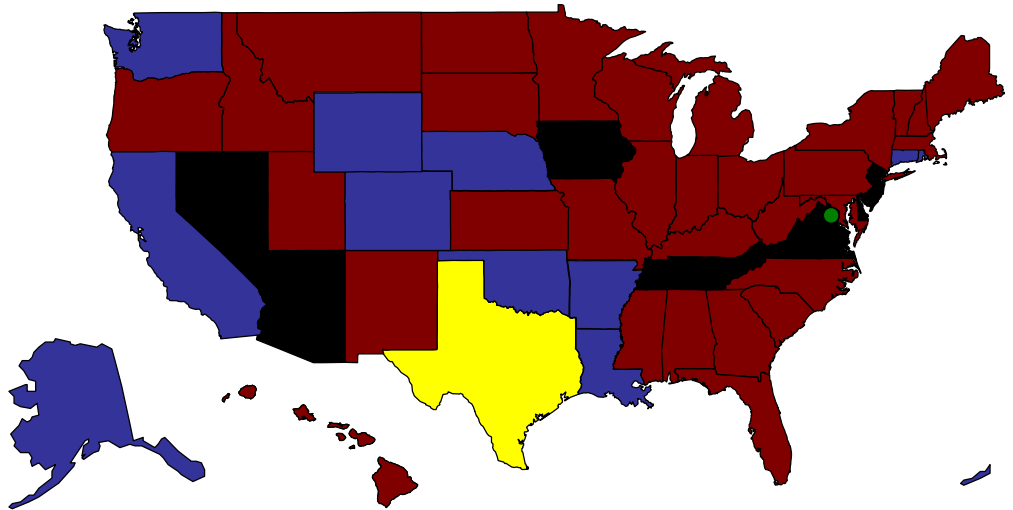
Tribal RSA Case Studies Released

The FHWA Office of Safety and FHWA Office of Federal Lands commissioned a series of four tribal road safety audits (RSAs) to demonstrate the usefulness and effectiveness of RSAs for tribal road agencies. The results of the RSAs have been compiled into a case studies document. Each case study includes photographs, a project description, a summary of key findings, and lessons learned. The document's purpose is to provide tribal governments with examples and advice that can assist them in implementing RSAs in their own jurisdictions. Hard copies of the Tribal RSA Case Studies are now available and will also be available in the near future online in electronic format. To obtain copies, please contact Eloisa Raynault at Eloisa.Raynault@dot.gov

Study on Road Weather Safety Audits (RWSA) Receives Recognition

The University of Wisconsin-Madison recently received a National Roadway Safety Award Honorable Mention for a study that resulted in the institutionalization of the Road Weather Safety Audit (RWSA) into WisDOT's policy. The study was highlighted along with other award winners in the most recent issue of the Safety Compass, a publication of the Federal Highway Administration Safety Program. To read the full article, visit http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/newsletter/safetycompass/safetycompass.htm.

National Map of RSA Activity

The FHWA Office of Safety maintains records of RSA activities occurring across the country and has developed a color-coded map to demonstrate each State's level of activity. If you have conducted, are about to conduct, or are even just considering performing an RSA in your area, please contact Heather Rigdon so that we can update our records. Heather can be reached by phone at (804) 775-3358 or by email to Heather.M.Rigdon@saic.com.

KEY

Yellow – RSA presentation given
Green – Scheduled RSA training
Blue – hosted or received RSA training
Red – piloting or have had occasional RSAs
Black – RSA program