



SAFETY Network

April 2020

Michigan.gov/ohsp

25th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit held in East Lansing

The 2020 Michigan Traffic Safety Summit was held March 10-11 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. More than 500 traffic safety professionals attended the

25th annual summit. There were six general session speakers, 30 workshops, and more than 15 exhibits. The first day of the Summit was the 20-year anniversary

of Michigan's primary seat belt law going into effect.



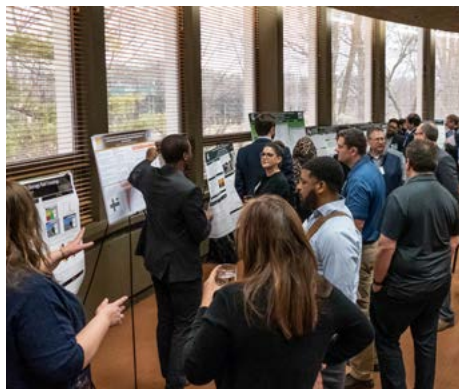
General Session: 20th Anniversary of Michigan's Seat Belt Law



Organizational Exhibitor League of Michigan Bicyclists booth with Erin Sloan-Turner



Reductions in Fatalities on Rural Roads—Capt. Kenneth Clary, Area Commander, Iowa State Police



Ideas for the Future: Research Sampler—Michigan Technological University



General Session: Victory Over Critical Injury—Sgt. Robert Bemis (Ret.), Operational Training Division, Pennsylvania State Police



Michigan Traffic Safety Summit 2020 Chair Kara Rueckert brings the summit to order.



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Sheriff honored for buckling up



Chippewa County Sheriff Michael Bitnar's trip to Paradise was anything but.

On Saturday, August 10, 2019, he was headed west on M-28, bringing a car full of supplies to the family cabin in Paradise, Michigan. About 25 miles from his destination, an east-bound vehicle pulled into Bitnar's lane, leaving him a split-second to react. He was able to avoid a head-on collision, yet was hit hard enough on the driver's side of his Prius to roll multiple times before landing in a ditch. Bitnar suffered multiple injuries including a ruptured spleen,

fractured ribs, a collapsed lung, and severe pain for weeks.

But Bitnar survived the crash because he was wearing his seatbelt.

To recognize his life-saving decision, the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) and AAA Michigan presented Bitnar with the Saved by the Belt Award. He was honored at the 25th Michigan Traffic Safety Summit, 20 years to the day that Michigan's primary seat belt law went into effect.

"As a law enforcement officer, I have seen so many people die in crashes that wouldn't have if they had only worn their seat belt," said Bitnar. "Wearing a seat belt is the most basic way to ensure your safety during a crash, and I'm thankful I wear mine every time I'm in a vehicle."

In 2018, 192 people in Michigan were killed in traffic crashes that were not wearing seat belts. A 2019 observational study by Michigan State University estimated statewide seat belt use at 94.4 percent.

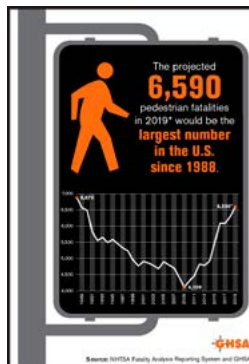
Michigan's primary seat belt law took effect on March 10, 2000.

"During the last two decades, 3,454 lives have been saved because of the seat belt law," said Michael L. Prince, OHSP director. "Buckling up saves lives, and Sheriff Bitnar is living proof."



Pedestrian deaths increase in 2019

The Governor's Highway Safety Association (GHSA) projects 6,590 pedestrians were killed on U.S. roads in 2019, a five percent increase from 2018 and the most in 30 years. The early findings are based on preliminary data reported from each state. The GHSA data found 30 states had an increase in pedestrian fatalities while 20 states saw a decrease. Five states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, and Texas) account for 47 percent of all pedestrian deaths. In 2018, there were 145 pedestrian deaths in Michigan.



TZD Toward Zero Deaths

March 24
161
Traffic Deaths
in Michigan this Year



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GTSAC recognizes achievements in traffic safety



The Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission (GTSAC) honored 10 individuals and organizations at the group's annual awards presentation in March at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. The event was part of the 25th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit. Three Richard H. Austin Long-Term Service Awards were presented to individuals that made significant long-term contributions to the field of traffic safety. Six awards were given for Outstanding Traffic Safety Achievement. The GTSAC also presented an award honoring a student involved in traffic safety.

2019 RICHARD H. AUSTIN LONG-TERM SERVICE AWARDS



The **Marquette City Fire Department (MCFD)** was honored for its Child Passenger Safety program. Since 2000, nearly 1,000 Marquette-area car seats have been evaluated by MCFD technicians and they distribute about 100 car seats a year to those in need. Starting in 1997, nine Marquette city firefighters have become Child Passenger Safety technicians. All have passed recertification every two years. This 100 percent recertification rate tops the national recertification rate of 56.1 percent. The department also donates 300 square feet of storage for car seats and

spends 3,000 hours annually conducting car seat education sessions.



The **University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI)**, was honored for developing the *Michigan Traffic Crash Facts (MTCF)* website. The website was developed in 2004 and a query tool was added in 2006. In 2018, more than 112,000 queries were completed. Traffic crash data for public use, provided by the UMTRI through the MTCF website, is essential to the traffic safety community to accurately identify traffic safety issues. The website has statewide reports, annual fact sheets, crash density maps, and more. The UMTRI provides technical assistance to the OHSP for data requests, presentations, and data workshops. The MTCF website has previously been honored by the National Association of Transportation Safety Information Professionals Traffic Records Forum.



Michigan State Police (MSP) **Sgt. Jose Patino** was honored for his work in traffic incident management. Sergeant Patino is one of the founders of the MSP Fifth District Hometown Security Team (HST) and has developed nationally-recognized

training programs on traffic incident management. During his 15 years as a member of the HST, Sergeant Patino implemented programs responsible for the quick clearance of multi-vehicle crashes, including a 2015 crash in blizzard conditions involving 193 vehicles. He has been the incident commander on 20 crashes involving 25 vehicles or more. Sergeant Patino's knowledge has led to the reopening of interstates hours ahead of forecasts. Because of his knowledge and leadership in such situations, Sergeant Patino has trained more than 1,000 law enforcement members in best practices of incident command.

OUTSTANDING TRAFFIC SAFETY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



MSP **Tpr. Robert Lindsay** was honored for his work as a Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) and aggressive enforcement of drunk drivers. Trooper Lindsay has been at the forefront of the fight against impaired driving. He became a DRE in 2016 after several weeks of extensive training and was also selected to be an oral fluid roadside test operator in 2017. He is also a Standardized Field Sobriety Test instructor. In 2017 and 2018, Trooper Lindsay was a leader in Operating While Intoxicated and Operating Under the Influence of Drugs arrests. He continues to seek training and learn new tactics to improve his abilities to combat drunk and drug-impaired drivers.

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The **MSP Calumet Post** was honored for prioritizing school bus safety. Three schools in the Calumet area reported having problems with motorists illegally passing school buses. Tpr. Kevin Rajala distributed a press release highlighting the school bus safety initiative. The Calumet Post ran three dedicated school bus patrols, focused on the weeks before and after holidays. A total of 74 hours was spent on the patrols, with the most number of traffic stops made at the beginning of the patrol. At the conclusion of the school bus safety initiative, school bus drivers reported fewer problems, with some schools reporting no issues. A news release was sent out at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year reminding motorists of the laws regarding school buses.



The **MSP Tri-City Post** was honored for its crash reduction traffic initiative. The initiative set out to reduce the number of crashes in 2018 on two major highways in their area by 10 percent against their five-year average. On I-75 and US-10 in Bay, Saginaw, and Midland counties, there was an average of 1,233 traffic crashes from 2013-2017. Using dedicated patrols and high-visibility enforcement tactics,

the Tri-City Post saw that number drop to 1,042 in 2018, a reduction of 15 percent. The initiative continues to be successful at helping prevent the loss of life, property damage, and traffic pattern interruption.



The **Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) North Region** and the **Traverse City Transportation Service Center (TSC)** were honored for installing new pedestrian hybrid beacons. The pedestrian hybrid beacons, or HAWK signals, were installed in June 2019. Since their installation, there have been no recorded bicycle or pedestrian crashes at the Grandview Parkway and Elmwood Avenue and Grandview Parkway and Hall Street intersections. There were five crashes in the two years prior to installation. The Grandview Parkway sees 30,000 vehicles per day and is four lanes wide with an intermittent median. Before the installation, there were no signalized crosswalks on Grandview Parkway. After considerable input from local groups like the TSC, the MDOT installed the HAWK signals at a cost of about \$100,000. HAWK signals work by combining a marked crosswalk on the street with overhead flashing lights that signal to both drivers and pedestrians when to stop and when to proceed.



Ontonagon High School was honored for its *Don't Be Distracted* campaign, which is part of their Strive for a Safer Drive (S4SD) program. S4SD is a student-led safe driving initiative. Ontonagon High School began participating in S4SD during the 2016-17 school year, focusing on the dangers of distracted driving. The high school campaign focused on students of all ages and partnered with Ewen-Trout Creek School, also in Ontonagon County. Students used state grant funds to create public service announcements to run on the school radio station. They also handed out T-shirts and wristbands with the *Don't Drive Distracted* slogan on them. MSP Tpr. Jerome Mazurek, a former Ontonagon student, brought a distracted driving simulator to the school for an event. All of the campaign elements helped raise awareness of the dangers of distracted driving.



Otsego High School was honored for its Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) group, which is a part of their S4SD program. SADD has been a part of the S4SD program for the last five years, running a winter driving safety campaign for two years, a distracted driving campaign for two years, and a texting and driving

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campaign for one year. The students used state grant funds to conduct parking lot observation surveys to determine how many drivers are distracted, and used various slogans and a brochure to highlight the different types of distracted driving. At a school assembly, students used a distracted driving simulator and participated in other games designed to show the dangers of driving while distracted. All of SADD's efforts have helped educate students on how to be a safer driver.

STUDENT AWARD



Mitchell Stachnik, a senior at Traverse City Central High School, received the 2019 GTSAC Student Award for his efforts in developing a safety awareness campaign on the dangers of drinking and driving. The leading cause of death among teenagers is traffic crashes. As a member of Central High's student senate and Students Against Negative Decision Making, Mitchell was pivotal in creating and implementing a school-wide educational awareness week on the dangers of drinking and driving. In the week leading up to the 2018 prom, Mitchell and classmates handed out wristbands with the word *sober* on them to students who pledged to stay sober and make good decisions during prom. No drunk driving incidents were reported during the 2018 prom season. Plans are in place to create a social media and video campaign for future years. Mitchell, who was also captain of Central High's football team, was nominated for the award by MSP Tpr. David Prichard.

STAFF PROFILE

Jessica Riley

TRAFFIC RECORDS PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Jessica has been with the OHSP for three and a half years and started with the State of Michigan in 2009. She is the program coordinator for traffic records.

What do you like most about your job?
Being able to collaborate with my OHSP peers and partners outside of our office.

What are you most proud of at work?
The excitement that comes with working with my grantees to achieve their goals, all while working toward overall traffic safety goals for our office. I have had the pleasure of working with some amazing people on great projects while at OHSP.

What are your interests or hobbies?
Outdoor adventures, reading, music, and spending time with my family and friends.

What personal achievement are you most proud of?
Completing physical challenges, each one gives me a little bit different sense of pride. One of my favorites was the Mt. Baldhead Challenge.

What's your favorite vacation spot?
Northern Michigan, I cannot narrow it down to one place. Michigan is beautiful all year round.

What's something people don't know about you?
I used to sell geckos.



Jessica with Andrew, Jack, a four-year-old chocolate lab, Gavin (11), and Kaleb (7) at Nordhouse Dunes in Manistee.



OHSP Vulnerable Roadway Users program coordinator Emily Shinevar presented on pedestrian and bicyclist safety at the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police conference on February 5, 2020 at the Amway Grand in Grand Rapids.

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Call them Crashes, Not Accidents

By: Kenneth Stecker and Kinga Canike

On average, someone is killed in a drunk driving crash every 53 minutes.¹ Every two minutes, someone is injured because of this entirely preventable crime.² At any given point, there are potentially two million people on the roads who have three or more drunk driving offenses.³ These drunk drivers intentionally choose to drive drunk, knowing that they may seriously injure or kill another innocent driver or passenger. Newspaper headlines and articles are typically written with the following words:

"Woman who killed best friend in drunk driving accident sobs as she gets sentenced to probation."⁴ "Tragedy struck last Friday evening as three people were killed in an accident on I-69 in Pike County. Initial investigation indicates that drugs played a role in the accident, in which Brian Paquette of Newport News, Virginia drove his SUV the wrong direction in both the northbound and southbound lanes of the interstate."⁵

Even appellate court opinions commonly use the following language:

"This case arises out of a fatal motor vehicle accident that occurred on March 20, 2017, at the intersection of Woodward Avenue and State Fair Avenue in Detroit, Michigan. At the time of the accident, defendant was allegedly driving reckless while she had cocaine in her body and lacked a valid driver's license."⁶

"While driving his truck in the early morning, defendant struck and killed a bicyclist. Defendant consented to a blood test after the accident, which revealed the presence of several controlled substances, including anti-depressants and cocaine."⁶

"A car being driven by defendant collided with a sports utility vehicle, killing three of its passengers. The accident occurred after defendant led police on a chase at speeds in excess of ninety miles per hour. After the accident, defendant's blood alcohol level was 0.135."⁷

How powerful is this word "accident?" The word suggests something of the unforeseen, an event that could not have been anticipated and for which no one can be blamed.⁸ From reading the above-mentioned headlines and court opinions, these events were undesirable and unfortunate happenings and unintentional occurrences on the part of the intoxicated drivers.



In essence, it was something that could not be predicted or avoided by the intoxicated driver; it was just something that happened. It is clear, however, that is not the case. These events are not "Acts of God," but predictable results of specific actions. They are "crashes!" Using the word "accident" in describing these tragedies implies the resulting injuries are unavoidable and that society should merely accept these injuries, fatalities, and damage as an inescapable or inevitable part of our daily lives. This is not a novel idea. Distinguishing between "accident" and "crash" dates back to a 1997 campaign launched by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).⁹



Since 1997, NHTSA no longer uses the word "accident" in materials it publishes and distributes. In addition, NHTSA employees no longer use the word "accidents" in speeches or other public remarks, in communications with the news medias, individuals, or groups in the public or private sector.¹⁰

Many law enforcement agencies, including both New York and San Francisco Police Departments, abandoned use of the word "accident" recognizing it could deter the focus on traffic safety necessary to reduce death rates.¹¹ "Words have impact, words evoke images and stir emotions."¹²

Additionally, in November 2019, the MDOT released a video explaining the distinction between a crash and an accident. More information and the video can be found on a new webpage: www.Michigan.gov/CrashNotAccident.

The website encourages people to go to www.crashnotaccident.com, where they can sign a pledge promising to help educate others about why "crash" is a better word than "accident." The site includes links to share a poster on social media.

"Before the movement to combat drunk driving, intoxicated drivers would say 'it was an accident' when they crashed their cars," the poster states. "Planes don't have accidents. They crash. Cranes don't have accidents. They collapse. And as a society, we expect answers and solutions. Traffic crashes are fixable problems, caused by

¹ <http://www.madd.org/drun-driving/about/>

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *New York Daily News*, "Woman who killed best friend in drunk driving accident sobs as she gets sentenced to probation," December 5, 2014.

⁵ <http://www.wagnerreese.com/blog/car-accident/wrong-way-driver-killsthree-on-i-69/>

⁶ *People v. Reeves*, case number 315840, decided August 21, 2014 (Michigan Court of Appeals) (Unpublished).

⁷ *People v. Gonzalez*, case number 199230, decided August 11, 1998 (Michigan Court of Appeals) (Unpublished).

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⁹ <http://www.planetizen.com/node/80560/does-it-matter-if-we-call-crashesaccidents>

¹⁰ http://www.roadpeace.org/resources/Crash_not_Accident_May_11_2011.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.h-nlaw.com/blog/accident-best-way-describe-car-crash/>

¹² Hughes, Brandon (July 2008). *Word Choice Matters: Crash vs. Accident*. The Alabama Prosecutor.

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dangerous streets and unsafe drivers. They are not accidents. Let's stop using the word 'accident' today."

As law enforcement officers and prosecutors, when investigating and/or prosecuting a drunk/drugged driving crash, distracted driving crash, or a reckless driving crash, it is important to avoid using the word "accident" in police reports and in opening statements or closing arguments. We have a responsibility for road safety in Michigan, and as we go forward, we need to continue to reassess our efforts to combat the threat to safety on our roads. One simple way we can make a difference is by eliminating the word "accident" and to use the appropriate word "crash."

For more information on this article and PAAM training programs, contact Kenneth Stecker or Kinga Canike, Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors, at 517-334-6060 or email at steckerk@michigan.gov or canikek@Michigan.gov. Please consult your prosecutor before adopting practices suggested by reports in this article. Discuss your practices that relate to this article with your commanding officers, police legal advisors, and the prosecuting attorney before changing your practice.



Smart DriverTEK workshops offered in Michigan

Technology is changing the driving experience. The new free, AARP Smart DriverTEK workshop will keep you in the know about the latest high-tech safety features in your current or future car. Learn about what new technologies are available, how they work, and how they can make driving safer and more enjoyable.

This interactive 90-minute workshop will help you understand:

- Blind-spot detection systems
- Forward-collision warning systems
- Lane-departure warning systems
- And much more!

To find a workshop near you, go to <https://campaigns.aarp.org/findaworkshop?cmp=RDRCT-ADS-SMDTEK-0-30917>.

OHSP Welcomes Dennis Raymo



Dennis Raymo is OHSP's new communications specialist for diverse audiences, focused on unique urban and rural traffic safety challenges.

Prior to joining OHSP, Dennis was a senior editor at media groups in north-eastern Pennsylvania and northern New York. He also served as director of communications for two Michigan associations in the fields of engineering and agriculture.

Dennis holds a bachelors degree in Communications from Michigan State University and lives in Lansing, MI.

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OHSP Staff:

Contact	Program Area	Phone	E-mail
Michael L. Prince	Director	517-284-3066	princem@michigan.gov
Kara Rueckert	Senior Executive Management Assistant	517-284-3066	rueckertk1@michigan.gov
Emily Upton	Administrative Assistant	517-284-3332	UptonE1@michigan.gov
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION			
Anne Readett	Section Chief	517-284-3120	readetta@michigan.gov
Mallory Fox	Grants Technician	517-284-3091	foxm12@michigan.gov
Charlotte Kilvington	Analysis & Evaluation	517-284-3068	kilvingtonc@michigan.gov
Jessica Riley	Traffic Records	517-284-3112	rileyj9@michigan.gov
COMMUNICATIONS			
Kendall Wingrove	Section Chief	517-284-3147	wingrovek@michigan.gov
Jonathan Benallack	Graphic Design	517-284-3048	benallackj1@michigan.gov
Dennis Raymo	Communications Representative	517-284-3045	raymod@michigan.gov
Jon Ross	Senior Editor	517-284-3141	rossj7@michigan.gov
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT			
Spencer Simmons	Section Chief	517-284-3136	simmonss6@michigan.gov
Ron Puruleski	Grant Monitoring & Compliance Auditor	517-284-3060	puruleskir1@michigan.gov
Julie Roth	Secondary Road Patrol	517-284-3121	rothj3@michigan.gov
Jean Shattuck	Accounting Technician	517-284-3123	shattuckj@michigan.gov
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT			
Alicia Sledge	Section Chief	517-284-3140	sledgea@michigan.gov
Jamie Dolan	Northern Michigan	517-331-6140	dolanj@michigan.gov
Pat Eliason	Police Traffic Services	517-284-3061	eliasonp@michigan.gov
Linda Fech	Teens/Seniors/Distracted Driving	517-284-3063	fechl@michigan.gov
Michael Harris	DUI Enforcement Training	517-420-7889	harrism13@michigan.gov
Christy Sanborn	Impaired Driving	517-284-3135	sanbornc@michigan.gov
Emily Shinevar	Vulnerable Roadway Users	517-284-3071	shinevare@michigan.gov

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