



# Rural Highway Safety and Community Health—One is Tied to the Other

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# Overview

- ✓ **Highway Traffic Death Toll**
- ✓ **Rural Highway Safety Issues**
- ✓ **Major Driver Behavioral Issues**
- ✓ **Major Highway Safety Trends of Concern**
- ✓ **Health Costs**
- ✓ **Strategies to Reduce Traffic Deaths and Reduce Health Care Costs**

# Highway Deaths –where are we?

- v In the US—stagnant in terms of the rate and the absolute number
- v In 2006 vs. 2005 : 42,642 vs. 43,510 a 2% drop
- v 1/2 the States were up and 1/2 down : the biggest changes: MN : a 12% reduction( 65 less deaths) ;  
VT : a 19% increase(14 more deaths)

# Highway Deaths in Rural America---2005---( FHWA )

- v Rural rate---2.39/100 million VMT
- v Urban Rate—0.96
- v Overall Rate—1.45 ((USDOT Goal 1.0))
- v Rural range: High: 3.96 in SC  
Low : 0.92 in MA  
VT: 1.09  
MN: 1:45

# Rural Highway Safety Issues

- v **Nationally about 60% of fatalities are rural**
- v **Majority of rural are on two lane roads; half are off the state highway systems**
- v **Poor data--for both the roadways and the crashes—lack of geo-coding**
- v **Sparse population density ;large road density**
- v **EMS limitations**
- v **Enforcement limitations**

# National Behavioral Concerns

- ✓ **Speeding: 30+ %**
- ✓ **Impaired drivers : 40%**
- ✓ **Unbelted Fatalities: 50%**
- ✓ **Unlicensed/revoked drivers: 20%**
- ✓ **Distracted /Sleepy, etc.---large and growing**

# Emerging Trends to Watch

- ✓ **Motorcycle deaths----10% of total and double-digit annual growth**
- ✓ **Large truck related fatalities---13% of total and truck VMT growing faster than auto VMT**
- ✓ **Aging driving population**
- ✓ **Growth in Hispanic population—their leading cause of death overall in the US**
- ✓ **Downsizing of passenger cars; increasing size and number of trucks**

# Health Costs of Motor Vehicle Crashes

- v **\$230 Billion per year annual in 2000: NHTSA—; 2.3% of GDP!!!!!!!!!!!!**
- v **Medical care slice of this is \$33 B per year**
- v **Understated---non-monetary health related costs not included---e.g. pain and suffering, loss of mobility, loss of sight, etc.**
- v **Pieces of the other economic components in NHTSA's estimate; e.g. insurance admin. ,legal , household work costs, etc.**
- v **Health costs are increasing slice of State Budgets**

# Needed Strategies

- ✓ **National and State Governor leadership commitments**
- ✓ **Adopt a National vision—1/2 the deaths in two decades---towards a vision zero**
- ✓ **Tie to the themes of Governors---the economy and family values**
- ✓ **Need advancement in all the E's**

# Needed Strategies—cont'd.

- v Better rural roads—a two lane standard
- v Increased rural high-type road capacity---more Interstate type lane-miles
- v Information and Communication technology; e.g. integrated EMS and transportation and other public safety entities; VII; V-V; vehicle technology; intersection and dangerous curve warning technology
- v Enforcement—laws, enforcement, adjudication
- v Enhanced EMS and hospital care
- v Strategies to reduce driving needs

# Bottom Line

- v We know a lot about the causes of rural highway traffic deaths and serious injuries
- v We have some very good countermeasures
- v *WE NEED THE POLITICAL WILL AND LEADERSHIP---TYING TOGETHER THE MESSAGE ON HEALTH COSTS AND TRAFFIC DEATHS IS NEEDED*