



REGION 6 - Teen Seat Belt Demonstration Project **February 2009 Project Highlights**

PLANNING

- To effectively address the challenge of increasing seat belt use among teens ages 16 - 20 years, the Region 6 Teen Seat Belt Project was created in August 2008. The campaign will consist of high-visibility enforcement, messages and materials tailored towards teens and their families regarding enforcement of seat belt laws. The project is modeled after previously successful regional efforts to increase belt use in high-risk groups (e.g., pick-up truck and rural drivers and occupants) where uniform messaging and coordinated outreach and enforcement efforts across States built the energy and momentum needed to increase seat belt use across State borders. Best practices from two successful statewide teen seat belt demonstration projects conducted in Colorado and Nevada in 2007 - 2008 will also be incorporated into this project.
- The approach will focus on geographic areas within four of the five Region 6 States (Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Texas and the Indian State) which have been selected because of a high incidence of unbuckled teen deaths. The project activity will complement the national "Click It or Ticket" (CIOT) initiative. The first campaign wave will be launched in May 2009 in conjunction with CIOT. There will be two interim waves and a final campaign again conducted in conjunction with the May 2010 CIOT mobilization. A thorough evaluation of the campaign activity and results will be conducted including the examination of control areas in each State.
- The States have developed a Work Plan to describe their planned activities in each of the key project component areas for the first wave in May 2009. The Campaign Timeline identifies the specific dates of the activities and is available on the project web site.

ENFORCEMENT

- Louisiana's program area is focused on the Baton Rouge area which encompasses seven parishes (East Baton Rouge, Livingston, Ascension, Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana and East Feliciana). The State has recruited the support of the Louisiana State Police Troop A, 8 local agencies and 3 sheriff departments to work the one week of teen enforcement using their existing grant contract funds. There are 3 universities/community colleges within the program area which will be asked to participate on a voluntary basis. A letter was sent to each agency by the Highway Safety Commission to explain the project and gain their support. All agencies recruited have confirmed their participation at this time with the exception of one university. An informational meeting is scheduled for April 7 to present the final project details and materials.
- The State of Mississippi will be focusing their attention on two major areas which covers eight counties, Jackson (Hinds, Leake, Madison and Rankin

Counties) and Gulfport-Biloxi (George, Harrison, Jackson and Stone Counties). Using existing grant funds or mini grants the State will have 19 local agencies and 8 sheriff departments working the week of teen enforcement. The State Patrol Troops C and K will also be participating through an overtime grant. All agencies were contacted through a letter sent by the law enforcement liaisons (LEL). The LELs will offer incentives for reporting. The highway safety office will also conduct equipment incentive drawings to ensure a high rate of participation and reporting activity. The teen program was a topic at two recent meetings during the month which included law enforcement agencies from the program counties: the annual Buckle Up for Life luncheon attended by over 170 officers, and, the Mississippi Association of Highway Safety Leaders (MAHSL) meeting.

- In New Mexico a concerted effort will be made to reach teens in three major areas covering 8 counties with the majority in the Albuquerque/Sante Fe area (Bernalillo, Lea, McKinley, Rio Arriba, San Juan, Sandoval, Sante Fe) and the Dona Ana County in the southeast. Overtime grants are being offered to the State Patrol, 10 local agencies, 8 sheriff departments and 1 tribal police agency. And the State has developed a special incentive award program that will result in three agencies receiving \$10,000 in grant funds. New Mexico's three LELs are recruiting the agencies for both the teen campaign and the CIOT enforcement weeks which follow for a total of three weeks of enforcement in the teen program area. Voluntary agency participation will also be solicited.
- The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) invited 50 law enforcement agencies in the five target counties (Bexar, Dallas, Harris, Hidalgo and Tarrant) to participate in the teen project. These counties are located in the Dallas, Houston, Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio media markets. A total of 29 agencies agreed to participate including 20 local agencies, 5 sheriff departments and 4 university police. The State Patrol will support the project using existing grant funds. The State law enforcement coordinators (LECs) are assisting with contacting the agencies, providing them background on the project and providing input for an incentive program to increase participation among voluntary agencies. A flyer promoting the teen incentive was developed and mailed to over 250 agencies in the target counties (see Attachment).
- To facilitate the evaluation of the project each of the States had to modify their data collection reporting systems and instructions to law enforcement in order to collect seat belt citation data by age. Not only was this activity time consuming but also costly. The changes to the Texas electronic data reporting system cost \$4,000.

COMMUNICATIONS – PAID and EARNED MEDIA

- **MEDIA PLAN:** Following the development of the State enforcement plans, The Tombras Group offered to provide each State with a media plan designed to reach the teen audience. Louisiana took them up on the offer. The States of Mississippi, New Mexico and Texas decided to have their media contractors prepare their media plan and then submitted them to The Tombras Group for review.
- The media plans outline the designated market areas (DMAs) and in some cases specific counties within DMAs where media should be purchased. In addition the media plan contains the recommended audience segment profiles, television strategy including gross rating point (GRP) goals, television programming strategy, radio strategy, alternative media strategy (e.g. on-line gaming, social networking, etc.) and the media dollar allocation by medium and market. To reach teens who frequent the Internet the States have been encouraged to give serious consideration to expending funds for alternative media. The Tombras Group hosted a conference call with the States to share

information regarding alternative media and its ability to reach teens at a greatly reduced cost.

- The States are now working with their local media contractors to translate the media plans into a media buy. The actual media buys will begin in mid April to early May.
- The Tombras Group is providing each State as requested with the "Out of Nowhere" television and radio spots produced previously for Colorado and Nevada which will be tagged with the State's identification and logo. It is the State's responsibility to provide the spots to their local stations.
- EARNED MEDIA: Akins-Crisp, The Tombras Group's sub contractor is developing a customized earned media planner for each State which will contain a fact sheet, news release, letter to the editor and Op/Ed. These items will be distributed to the States for their use and to share with partners. The items can be further customized to provide local data and project information.
- CREATIVE MATERIALS: A variety of posters and web banners are available to the States for downloading from the project web site or having The Tombras Group add their State logo to a new electronic version. The States can provide a link to their partners or duplicate and distribute the items directly.
- KICKOFF EVENTS: Each State has also begun planning their media kickoff events to announce the campaign. Because the CIOT campaign will immediately follow the teen mobilization the States are paying close attention to organizing the events to equally attract media attention. Louisiana has contracted with a vendor to develop earned media services which includes the coordination of press events. Mississippi is planning two press conferences through their Department of Public Safety Public Affairs Office. Press kits will be distributed to local agencies who will be asked to conduct media events. In New Mexico there are plans for a news conference and conducting editorial boards in each program county. A teen video competition is being developed for the schools and will take place during the month of April including paid media announcements for publicity. Texas will hold kickoff press events in the four media markets at local high schools and will feature rollover convincers as well as teenagers as spokespersons. A recent "saved by the belt" teen crash survivor is being pursued as a possible additional avenue to speak out to teen peers about seat belt use.

OUTREACH

- A comprehensive outreach program to effectively communicate the campaign's objective is important for two audiences: participating law enforcement agencies and the public. Although the campaign message is designed for teens, the law will be uniformly enforced. Each State has been encouraged to adopt the practices used in Colorado and Nevada during their demonstration projects to proactively educate these two audiences. The data demonstrating the high incidence of unbuckled teen fatalities must be communicated to teens, parents, the media and the general public. An educational effort must be developed to engage teens and parents in a dialogue with law enforcement and other teens through the schools well ahead of the enforcement week to give them plenty of notice. The media and general public must also be approached to explain the project background and share local data regarding teen crashes. The campaign's objective to take enforcement action against all violators regardless of age must be clearly communicated to all.
- A conference call between Colorado and Nevada law enforcement staff and the Region 6 States was held to discuss the successful strategies implemented in the demonstration project. The annual Region 6 LEL conference also offered an opportunity to discuss these challenges and solutions.
- Louisiana has contracted with the Louisiana Youth Prevention Services to provide outreach services both in the schools and with other community organizations. This group already has good safety related relationships in place with many organizations. The agency will coordinate meetings with

school officials, organize the Quick-Click Rock the Belt events and distribute materials. To reward good teen behavior and reinforce the proactive approach law enforcement officers will be provided with 5,000 iTunes free music download cards to distribute during enforcement contacts.

- In Mississippi contacts have been started with all middle and high schools in the program area. In consultation with the Student Advisory Board, the State's Rock the Belt promotional program will be offered to all of the schools. The Board has also been asked for input on promotional items and has been tasked with creating a PSA idea for the project. MAHSL will make community organization contacts to publicize the campaign message and solicit support. To reach the Internet audience Mississippi will place information on their "Teens on the Move" MySpace page and their SADD Facebook page. Music download cards will be made available along with t-shirts, car magnets and posters with the CIOT message.
- New Mexico is developing a two-fold on line opportunity to begin education and awareness activity in mid April allowing them to reach the teen audience with in-school education and traditional advertising before their attention turns to final exams and the end of the school year. First an on line interactive quiz will be promoted through paid radio spots to win a \$5 iTunes download card. Then a "create your own teen video and load it into a web site" promotion will offer \$5 iTunes cards and eligibility for an array of prizes. The winner and winning video will be unveiled at the CIOT kickoff news conference. Law enforcement officers around the State will also be distributing the \$5 iTunes cards through checkpoints to teens who are wearing their seat belt. A number of other partners will assist with outreach and will be given posters which are being specially created for the project.
- The five counties in the Texas program area represent a large portion of the State's population. To assist in conducting a concentrated outreach effort, the State has tapped the highly creative services of their contractor, ThinkStreet. Eye catching materials have been developed to promote the campaign to teens (see Attachment). The items feature a police officer who encourages teens to visit a specially designed teen themed web page. The page will contain a two minute video of the rollover convincer and will be hosted by teens in a "reality TV" style. The web page will also give teens the opportunity to download a free song for their MP3 player or iPod. ThinkStreet is contacting over 200 schools in the five program counties to inform them about the project and offer implementation kits consisting of posters, banners, static clings, business cards and yard signs. Already over 100 schools have committed. Texas has a long list of other partners including universities, alcohol beverage and law enforcement associations who are being asked to brainstorm ideas to reach the teen audience. The State has developed a form to track outreach activities (see Attachments).

EVALUATION

- The evaluators for the States have been in frequent contact with the Preusser Research Group (PRG) to determine the design and methodology for awareness and seat belt observation use surveys which will precede and follow the teen campaign. February was a very busy month from the standpoint of setting up the evaluation funding, implementation (labor), sample designs, survey instrument revisions and planned training sessions. The State evaluators are also assisting PRG in identifying the control area samples. PRG conducted multiple conference calls, in addition to other communications, with all participating States to determine responsibility for all awareness and observational surveys in both program and control areas.
- To illustrate the activity within the States, the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State successfully completed a sampling design for the four designated counties in the Gulf Coast Area. There are 44 sites where traffic is scheduled to be observed during the week of March 23 - 29. This

will include 34 high school locations (77.3%), 7 Colleges (15.9%) and 3 retail locations (6.8%). Toward the end of the month the development of the sampling design for the Jackson area was begun.

- The May 2009 baseline and post campaign surveys face a unique challenge. The population which will be sampled and observed are teens who are most often found in school settings but most schools dismiss the students in mid - late May or early June. This has caused the evaluators to closely examine school schedules and consider potential alternative approaches to ensure that both the baseline and post campaign groups observed are relatively similar in age makeup. As a result of this challenge and other cost considerations the evaluation design was changed to provide for three waves of evaluation: baseline, post-October 2009 and post-May 2010 or October 2010.
- Texas decided to add a fourth set of surveys following the May 2009 campaign in order to more immediately determine the effect of the teen program.
- Plans for training of observers are currently being discussed in all States except Texas, where observers have already been conducting teen-related observational surveys. Observation surveys will be conducted prior to April 1, 2009 in all States except New Mexico, where they will begin in mid-April. Orientation for awareness surveyors will occur (where applicable) upon delivery of survey instruments for the baseline surveys.

COORDINATION

- Project coordination services are provided by the Mercer Consulting Group LLC. MCG facilitated visits to each State by the Planning Team in September and October. These meetings were conducted to establish the geographic foundation for the campaign as well as provide a forum for each State to ask specific questions regarding their unique challenges and needs. Following the visits MCG worked with the State and the other Planning Team members to finalize the State's enforcement plan and media plans.
- Following the State visits, the majority of contact between the States and the Planning Team is by telephone and email. Technical assistance is provided to help the States with the development of their May 2009 campaign Work Plan and other project activities. The Work Plan document details the State's intentions for development and implementation of each major campaign component and identifies an estimated budget by funding type.
- MCG is responsible for the development of the project web site: www.region6teenbeltproject.org. The site became operational in October 2008 and contains a variety of information regarding the project planning, current activities, media materials, evaluation and links to other useful web sites. New information is periodically added to the site.

ATTACHMENTS :

- Texas flyer for law enforcement incentive program
- Texas Teen CIOT outreach campaign creative material
- Texas FY2009 Teen/CIOT Media and Outreach Planner form

####

For additional information contact:
projectmanager@region6teenbeltproject.org