

North Shore Traffic Safety Coalition

quarterly newsletter

October 2014



Covington Police Department offers drivers sweet treat for seatbelt compliance

Some Covington drivers got an unexpected surprise this summer when police officers pulled them over then handed them an ice cream cone as a reward for wearing their seat belts.

As part of an offbeat safety campaign, Covington Police Chief Timothy Lentz stationed officers throughout the city. After they were pulled over, drivers were asked if they were aware of R.S. 32:295.1. Unsurprisingly, most were not familiar with the numeric citation of the law requiring drivers and passengers to wear seat belts. Officers then walked back to their patrol cars and returned with an ice cream cone, to the relief of nervous drivers, a handful of whom were captured in a public service announcement filmed and produced by the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office.

Blue Bell Ice Cream donated the 300 ice cream cones and St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office donated the videographer and production services.

"At the end of the day," said Lentz, the campaign "didn't cost a penny besides our time."

You can check out the PSA produced through the campaign on the Covington Police Department's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/covlapd>.



Covington Police Chief Timothy Lentz hands a relieved driver an ice cream cone as a reward for wearing her seatbelt in this screen shot from the PSA produced by the department with the help of the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office and Blue Bell.



Local Road Safety Program accepting project applications

The Local Road Safety Program (LRSP) funds projects aimed at reducing fatal and serious injury crashes on locally-owned and -operated roads.

These projects are typically low-cost safety improvements, including measures like installing signs, pavement markings, guardrails, intersection improvements, safety studies, and curve delineation. A project can receive up to \$500,000 in funding with a local match of 5 percent to 10 percent.

While applications for this program can now be submitted all year, the next quarterly selection of projects will occur in mid-November, and applicants are encouraged to apply by October 10 for priority consideration.

Program application, guidelines, and policies are available at www.ltrc.lsu.edu/ltp/lrsp.html.

Questions can be directed to LRSP Manager Rudynah Capone at (224)767-9718 or Rudynah.Capone@la.gov.

St. Tammany firefighter receives Saved by the Belt award

As a member of the District 12 Fire Department, Greg Valley has seen his share of serious car crashes and been reminded all too frequently of the importance of wearing his seat belt.

He believes his decision to wear his seat belt may have saved his life this June when his was involved in a near head-on collision.

Valley was driving home in his truck near Folsom on La. 25 when his vehicle was struck by a sleep-deprived mother of an infant. The woman, police said, fell asleep behind the wheel and crossed the center line. The collision crushed and pushed Valley's truck on its side and caused his airbag to deploy.

Still using crutches because of leg injuries sustained in the crash, Valley was celebrated at August's North Shore Traffic Safety Coalition meeting. He said he was grateful to have been spared more debilitating injury and that he hoped his example could remind others about the importance of buckling up.



Greg Valley, pictured at center in the photo above, poses for a photo after receiving a Saved by the Belt award in honor of the seat belt that may have saved his life.

St. Tammany Fire Fighter Greg Valley's truck was crushed in a June collision. Valley believes his seat belt saved him from potentially-fatal injury. Photos courtesy of Louisiana State Police Troop L Public Affairs Officer Greg Marchand.



LSHC: LA seat-belt usage rate reaches all-time high; St. Tammany leads N.O. metro region in compliance

A new report finds that Louisiana drivers reached an all-time high for front-seat seatbelt usage in 2014. The estimated rate of 84.1 percent for front-seat occupants is a statistically significant increase of 1.6 percentage points from the 2013 rate of 82.5 percent, according to research prepared for the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission. The seat belt usage rate for front-seat vehicle occupants has risen 9.6 percentage points since 2009, when it was just 74.5 percent.

Researchers found substantial variation among the 38 parishes in which seat belt compliance was observed. The parish with the highest estimated compliance rate for the New Orleans metro region was St. Tammany, with 88.7 percent front-seat compliance, followed by Washington Parish (82.6 percent), Tangipahoa (82.1 percent), Orleans (81 percent), and Jefferson (80.7 percent).

Statewide, rear seat belt use remains relatively low, at an estimated 58.9 percent, according to researchers. The 2014 rear seat belt usage rate estimate remained flat compared with 2013 un-weighted numbers. In New Orleans, the un-weighted estimated rear seat compliance rate was 54.8 percent. Statistics on rear-seat compliance from other parishes in the metro area were not provided in the report.

Additionally, researchers observed that men were less likely to be buckled up than women, that African Americans were less likely to be buckled up than whites or Hispanics, and that those riding in pickup trucks were less likely than those in other vehicle types to be buckled up. They also found that seat belt usage was highest on interstates and U.S. and state roadways.

The same report also sampled motorcycle helmet usage and found 100 percent compliance among the 247 motorcycles observed. This suggests that mandatory helmet laws may have had a dramatic effect in ensuring helmet usage for motorcycles. In 2004, the year that a statewide mandatory motorcycle helmet law was reinstated, researchers estimated just 57.7 percent of motorcycle riders wore helmets.



TRAFFIC SAFETY NEWS IN BRIEF

TRACC hosts safety summit in Hammond

Tangipahoa – Reshaping Attitudes for Community Change, or TRACC, hosted a safety summit in late July in Hammond. The half-day event focused on substance abuse, occupant protection and implications for traffic safety.

Among the speakers at the summit was New Orleans Regional Safety Coalition member Norma Broussard, director of felony DWI and traffic safety outreach for the Jefferson Parish District Attorney's Office. Broussard spoke about that parish's experience with DWI Court, a jail-diversion program that targets select repeat DWI offenders with an intensive, minimum 18-month program designed to help them address addiction and other psychological problems that undermine their ability to refrain from reoffending.

Additionally, North Shore Regional Safety Coalition Coordinator Ron Whittaker talked about strategies for improving seat belt usage.

The summit was organized and emceed by Bridget Bailey, prevention director for TRACC, which is a member of the North Shore Regional Safety Coalition.

It was funded by a grant from the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission.

BELOW: North Shore Regional Safety Coalition Coordinator Ron Whittaker speaks about strategies for improving seat belt usage. Whittaker was among the speakers featured at a half-day safety summit hosted by TRACC in Hammond in July.



Stay informed about traffic-safety related events with interactive online calendar

A web-based calendar has been created to share information about traffic-safety related events and deadlines among several regional traffic safety coalitions in Southeast Louisiana. Intended as a supplement to the statewide Destination Zero Deaths calendar, the calendar, available at <http://teamup.com/ksfd3fc5a04ba8904d/>, is currently set up for use by the North Shore, New Orleans and South Central traffic safety coalitions. Please email Emilie Bahr at ebahr@norpc.org or Tricia Keffer at tkeffer@norpc.org if you have trouble using the calendar or if you would like to add events or important deadlines.

New state law restricts cell phone use in school zones

A new law took effect August 1 that bars drivers from using cell phones or other wireless devices while driving in active school zones. Drivers are now prohibited from using their phones to call, text or surf the internet within school zones, except in case of an emergency. Phone calls using hands-free devices are still allowed.

State Trooper Melissa Matey, an active member of the New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition, spoke with FOX 8 TV about the new law and the dangers of distracted driving. "Studies have shown that 37 percent of your brain power is taken off the road and focused onto whatever distraction that it is, whether it's a cell phone, passenger or conversation you're having in the car," Matey told the television station. First-time violations of the new law can yield a \$175 fine, with additional fines possible for subsequent violations.



New restrictions governing cell phone use in school zones are now in effect statewide.

Report: Louisiana hwy. fatalities higher than national average, but declining

A report released in July found that Louisiana is improving according to some key indicators of roadway safety even as the state's fatality numbers remain high compared with some other parts of the country.

The report, by Michael Sivak of the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, looked at roadway fatality data from 2005 and 2012 in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. He analyzed safety according to two primary metrics: fatality rates per distance driven and fatality rates per population.

Per distance driven, Louisiana's fatality rate stood at 15.4 per billion miles in 2012, according to Sivak's analysis of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, above the national average of 11.3 fatalities per billion miles. The most dangerous state by this measure was West Virginia, with 17.63 fatalities per billion miles. Faring best in this category was the District of Columbia, which saw just 4.2 fatalities per billion miles driven.

Looking at fatality rates per population, Sivak again found that Louisiana outpaces the nation, with 15.69 fatalities per 100,000 people, compared with the national rate of 10.69. The worst state by this measure was North Dakota, which saw a rate of 24.3 fatalities. The District of Columbia was again found to be the safest in the country by this metric, with 2.37 fatalities per 100,000.

The report was not all grim for Louisiana. The state's roadway fatalities are on the decline in overall number and accounting for population and distance driven. Between 2005 and 2012, the state saw a 27.5 percent reduction in fatality rate per distance driven, Sivak found, better than the average national reduction of 22.2 percent. The state simultaneously achieved a reduction in fatality rate per population of 25.7, slightly below the national average of 27.1 percent.

Washington, D.C. is tougher than many parts of the country where traffic-safety laws are concerned. This includes stringent penalties for impaired driving; a ban on hand-held cell phones while driving; and a stipulation that it is up to the driver of a vehicle to ensure that everyone is buckled up. Failure to comply with this last provision can get a driver slapped with a fine and 2 points on their driver's license.

You can read the full report here: <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/108252/103020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

TRAFFIC SAFETY NEWS IN BRIEF

State Farm's Celebrate My Drive urges teens to drive smart, earn money for their school

Celebrate My Drive is a program sponsored by State Farm with the goal of encouraging safe driving among teens. Each safe driving commitment made on the Celebrate My Drive website by a student or a member of their community (anyone from teachers to parents to bus drivers) increases their school's chance of being one of 100 schools across the country that will receive a prize, with a grand prize of \$100,000 and a concert performed by The Band Perry. Several schools in Louisiana won last year: Parkway High in Bossier City and West Monroe High in West Monroe each won \$25,000, and Academy of Our Lady in Marrero won the grand prize. Several schools on the North and South shores have registered, and we'd like to encourage more. For more information and to register, visit www.celebratemydrive.com by October 7.

New coordinators named for New Orleans and North Shore traffic safety coalitions

Beginning this month, Tricia Keffer and Emilie Bahr will be handling coordination for the New Orleans and North Shore traffic safety coalitions. Both women have been involved with the safety coalitions for the past few months and are passionate about improving safety for all roadway users. One of their early priorities will be to expand awareness of and participation in the coalitions.

Tricia is a transportation planner at the Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany and Tangipahoa parishes, where she has used her expertise in GIS mapping and data analysis on projects related to the regional freight network, economic development, and traffic counts. Tricia grew up in Pennsylvania, studying Global Issues and Human Rights at the University of Pittsburgh and working at a charitable foundation before moving to New Orleans. She obtained her master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of New Orleans in 2013.

Emilie is also a transportation planner at the RPC and came to planning and transportation by way of a career in journalism. She grew up in Baton Rouge and lived in Dallas, Austin, Paris, Washington, D.C., and Thibodaux before moving to New Orleans. She loves cities, writing, running and riding her bike.

Ron Whittaker, who has served until now as coordinator of the North Shore coalition, will remain actively involved.



Tricia Keffer, pictured in the photo at left on a recent trip to Nova Scotia, and Emilie Bahr, at left in the photo on right taken at the NORTSC Safety Summit in July, this month take over as coordinators of the North Shore and New Orleans Regional traffic safety coalitions.



COMING UP

OCTOBER 2: North Shore Regional Coalition meeting, 11:30 a.m. Bike and pedestrian safety on the North Shore will be a topic of conversation.

OCTOBER 7: Celebrate My Drive registration deadline. Visit www.celebratemydrive.com for information.

OCTOBER 10: Local Road Safety Program project priority application deadline for November funding awards. Visit www.ltrc.lsu.edu/ltap/lrsp.html for more information.

OCTOBER 19-25: National Teen Driver Safety Week

OCTOBER 20-24: National School Bus Safety Week

OCTOBER 22-25: Child Passenger Safety Technician Course, Mandeville. Contact Bridget Gardner at bgardn@lsuhs.edu or Patty Clesi at pdough@lsuhsc.edu for info.

NOVEMBER 6: North Shore Regional Coalition meeting, 11:30 a.m. Drunk driving alternatives will be one of the topics discussed.

NOVEMBER 10-12: Louisiana Smart Growth Summit, Baton Rouge, hosted by CPEX. Visit <http://summit.cpep.org/> for more information.

DECEMBER: National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

DECEMBER 12-JAN. 1: Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over national crackdown

JANUARY 21-23: American Planning Association-Louisiana Chapter Conference, Baton Rouge. Visit louisianapanning.com for info.

The North Shore Traffic Safety Coalition

The North Shore Traffic Safety Coalition is one of nine similar bodies across the state formed to implement and sustain Louisiana’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan by bridging gaps between the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, local governments, law enforcement, public health representatives, educational leaders, civic organizations, the general public and other safety stakeholders working in St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington parishes.

