

Study Finds Employer Campaigns Fail

Problems With Company Belt-Use Approach

A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study of a program to increase safety belt use through employer campaigns aimed at changing employee belt-wearing behavior has produced a discouraging set of findings.

The study, completed last year for NHTSA by Opinion Research Corp., is particularly relevant to the agency's recently announced plans to make belt-use programs a top priority. It is believed that such programs would depend in part on the cooperation of employers in participating in belt-use encouragement campaigns directed at their employees.

The Opinion Research Corp. findings were these:

- Corporate safety directors "generally are reluctant to involve employees in an educational program directed specifically at safety belt usage, although they acknowledge the importance of such a program."
- Even when companies agree to undertake such programs, there is no resulting significant increase in employee belt use. *(Cont'd on next page)*

House Chairman Warns Against Safety Trade-Off

The Reagan Administration's efforts to lighten the automotive industry's regulatory burden should not be paid for by a higher highway death rate or by forgoing consumer benefits, the chairman of a House oversight unit has warned federal officials.

The Administration's announced revision of auto regulations received scrutiny during a July 29 hearing before the Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Consumer Protection, and Finance, chaired by Rep. Timothy E. Wirth (D.-Colo.).

Wirth urged regulators at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to keep safety considerations and the agency's legal obligations paramount during the review process. "For while it is fashionable these days to attack regulation as

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Problems With Company Belt-Use-Use Approach (Cont'd from page 1)

In the study, the research company contacted 23 major U.S. corporations to determine their possible willingness to participate in the program. Although many expressed “an initial interest” in participating, “only two companies – Allied Chemical Co. and American Cyanamid Co. – agreed to participate in the study.” Reasons given for non-participation included “too busy,” “unable to justify cost of program,” and possible “employee relations” problems.

Despite this reception, a proposed “Occupant Restraint Usage Promotion Program Plan” assembled by NHTSA in May counts heavily on large company participation. “The corporate organization network provides one of the greatest potential for increasing safety belt usage among a variety of subpopulations,” the plan says. “Employers have a variety of means by which they can add to the incentives for employees to wear safety belts on official business and subsequently in their private lives.”

Safety directors of the two participating companies in the NHTSA-sponsored survey were provided with belt-use materials and briefings. Meanwhile, observations of belt use were taken both at company plants selected for participation in the program and other “control” plants where employees would not be exposed to the belt-use campaign.

Promotion Goes On For Nine Months

The program lasted nine months, with belt use observations being made before, during, and after it. Employees at whom the campaign was targeted were exposed to an intensive diet of written and audio-visual material about belt use and motor vehicle crashes, as well as briefings and belt use demonstrations.

According to the researchers, the campaigns resulted in virtually no increase in belt use. “In one experimental plant, the before, during, and after usage scores averaged 5.2 percent. A net gain in usage of 2.2 percent between the before and after studies, while in a favorable direction, is not statistically significant.

“In the other experimental plant, the before, during, and after usage scores average 9.6 percent. A net gain in usage of 1.1 percent between the before and after studies is not statistically significant.” The study also found a net gain of 1.3 percent between the before and after studies in a control plant, which it noted is also “not statistically significant.”

The study is entitled “Evaluation of Safety Belt Education Program for Employees” (DOT HS-805-472). Copies are available from the National Technical Service, Springfield, VA 22161.

Canadians Find Seat Belt Use Declining

Canadian transportation officials have reported a significant decline last year in seat belt use in their country. While belt-use levels were much higher in those provinces having compulsory belt laws, even there the number of drivers buckling up showed a drop.

The Road Safety Branch of Transport Canada estimated that in the provinces having no seat belt use laws the driver use rate in cars equipped with shoulder belts had dropped to 9 percent in 1980, compared with 13 percent the previous year. On the basis of all cars, only 8 percent of the drivers were estimated to be wearing shoulder belts, compared with 11 percent in 1979. (The most recent surveys by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported the use of safety belts in this country at 11 percent. See *Status Report*, Vol. 16, No. 8, June 10, 1981.)

For the four provinces having mandatory belt-use laws – Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British

Columbia – the estimated shoulder belt use by drivers of all cars slipped slightly but 42 percent of the drivers still were complying. These results from the provinces with use laws brought average use for the entire nation to 35 percent.

Between the two surveys in 1979 and 1980 there was an observed increase in the percentage of automobiles equipped with shoulder belts, the proportion rising from 91 percent to 95 percent. While for the nation as a whole the proportion of drivers wearing shoulder belts in all cars dropped only from 36 percent to 35 percent, the proportion of drivers wearing shoulder belts in cars equipped with such belts fell from 43 percent to 36 percent.

For all cars, the estimated proportion of drivers wearing shoulder belts in 1980 ranged from a low of 3 percent in Newfoundland to a high of 56 percent in Saskatchewan.

**Estimates of Shoulder Seat Belt Use
According to 1979 and 1980 Surveys**

Province	% of Drivers Wearing Shoulder Belts In Cars Equipped With Shoulder Belts		% of Drivers Wearing Shoulder Belts In All Cars	
	1979	1980	1979	1980
Newfoundland	4.8	2.8	4.1	2.7
Prince Edward Island	15.7	6.2	14.4	6.1
Nova Scotia	14.9	9.3	12.7	9.0
New Brunswick	14.7	5.6	13.5	5.2
Québec*	42.6	39.0	38.7	37.9
Ontario*	52.7	43.7	44.1	42.3
Manitoba	5.9	6.0	4.8	5.5
Saskatchewan*	60.9	60.7	50.8	56.1
Alberta	16.3	12.7	12.8	11.5
British Columbia*	59.7	49.3	49.6	44.8
Provinces with no seat belt legislation	13.0	9.3	10.7	8.5
Provinces with seat belt legislation	51.0	43.9	43.5	42.0
Canada	42.7	36.4	36.4	34.7

Shoulder Belt Fitting

1979 = 91.2%
1980 = 95.0

*Provinces with mandatory belt-use laws

North Carolina Adopts Child Restraint Bill

North Carolina has become the tenth state to adopt some form of child restraint legislation, passing a requirement for restraints for children under two years of age. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 16, No. 10, July 15, 1981.)

The North Carolina bill differs from requirements in other states in that for a child one year or older the restraint requirement may be met by securing the child in a seat belt. The law applies to any driver with

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North Carolina Adopts Child Restraint Bill (Cont'd from page 3)

a North Carolina driver's license operating his own car or a "family purpose" vehicle. Violators for the first two years under the act will be given a warning ticket only, and thereafter a \$10 fine will be levied.

The act becomes effective on July 1, 1982, and will expire three years later. Meanwhile the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center is directed to conduct a statewide study to determine effectiveness of the requirements.

House Chairman Warns Against Safety Trade-Off (Cont'd from page 1)

the root of all evil," said Wirth, "we can never let it become fashionable to promote carnage on our highways.

"While each of us is concerned that Detroit remain in a competitive position, rolling back safety standards which apply equally to foreign and domestic manufacturers alike does not appear to be a rational way of doing it."

Wirth said he also is concerned that current plans to modify the agency's public information programs might curtail the public's right to know about the age, performance, and quality of vehicles – a concept embodied in the Motor Vehicle Information and Cost Savings Act of 1972.

Peck Claims Consumers Will Benefit

Raymond Peck, head of NHTSA, said consumers would benefit by the regulatory overhaul, with negligible safety loss. The rollback of regulations now in rulemaking could save the auto industry \$556 million in capital costs, Peck said. Although neither the industry nor the federal government expects car prices to decline as a result of the rollback, Peck said prices should not climb as rapidly as they otherwise would if regulations were not relaxed.

Peck noted, though, that lowering the current 5 mph "no-damage" bumper standard – requiring auto bumpers to withstand a 5 mph barrier crash – could actually cost manufacturers money because they would have to redesign and retool bumper systems to adapt to a weaker rule. The expense would be recouped in lower gasoline costs, Peck said.

Peck said a notice of proposed rulemaking on the bumper standard will be issued within the next few weeks.

A spokesman for Consumers Union said a recent NHTSA study purporting to show consumer benefits for a 5 mph front bumper but a net loss for a 5 mph rear bumper is seriously flawed.

IIHS Official Cites Bumper Improvements

Brian O'Neill, research vice president for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, presented filmed crash test results which review the gains in bumper design over the past 10 years. O'Neill said recent efforts by the auto industry to both meet the current standard and lighten cars for improved fuel economy have resulted in lighter, more effective bumper systems.

Some committee members voiced concern that NHTSA's recent decision to drop rulemaking on multi-piece rims might have been ill-advised. In a lengthy exchange, Peck insisted the agency's decision to abandon the rulemaking was made under the previous administration and that it was based on the adoption of Oc-

cupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rules protecting tire service workers and the belief that the most dangerous models of multipiece wheels are no longer being produced. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 16, No. 8, June 10, 1981.)

O'Neill challenged such reasoning, pointing out that NHTSA had offered no evidence that the suspect wheels no longer are being produced. "In fact," he told the committee, "such rims are still widely sold and millions of them are still in use."

The OSHA rules, he added, cannot cover highway or many service area situations in which exploding multipiece rims have inflicted death or injury. O'Neill reported that the Institute has notified NHTSA of 383 cases of explosive separations of multipiece rims, resulting in 78 deaths and 284 injuries.

New Bumper Docket Found

Diversion of some documents relating to the property damage bumper standard from the regular National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) docket has caused some confusion for interested parties.

Since 1973, public documents relating to the standard (Part 581), a rule requiring passenger car bumpers to withstand front and rear impacts of up to 5 mph, have been filed in Docket No. 73-19. In April the Department of Transportation announced its intention to roll back those requirements. (See *Status Report*, Vol. 16, No. 6, April 27, 1981.)

Also in April, without the usual notice in the Federal Register, a new docket was opened at NHTSA for bumper-related information. It was numbered 81-07 and soon accumulated 11 documents.

In July, Frank Berndt, NHTSA chief counsel, learned of the duplicate dockets after inquiries to his office. Berndt sent a memo to the docket section ordering the items in 81-07 to be transferred to 73-19 and asking that any new items be placed in the old docket to avoid public confusion.

Despite the order, the documents remain in 81-07. Too late to change, ruled the docket section; too many copies of the documents had been requested under that number. In order for the public to know where to look for the documents, interested individuals will have to read Berndt's memo which, fortunately, was filed in the old docket.

Attached to that memo is a listing of all the documents filed in the 81-07 file. To get to that list, inquirers should ask for copies of 73-19-GR-083 in the Technical Reference Section, Public Docket, NHTSA, 400 7th St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

Safety Appropriations Reported to House

If the House adopts the Appropriations Committee's recommendations for fiscal 1982 (starting Oct. 1, 1981), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) budget will continue at its 1981 level and some highway safety programs slated for extinction under the Reagan Administration will survive for another year.

Under the budget proposed by the Appropriations Committee, NHTSA's operations and research budget would remain at the 1981 level of \$85.9 million, instead of the \$93 million requested by the Admin-

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Safety Appropriations Reported To House (Cont'd from page 5)

istration. Much of the requested increase was trimmed from NHTSA's projected general administration budget. Here's how it breaks down for NHTSA:

- Rulemaking programs would receive \$5.7 million, compared to the Administration's request for \$6.3 million.
- Enforcement activities would receive \$10.3 million compared to the requested \$10.8 million.
- The Transportation Systems Center in Cambridge, Mass., would receive \$10.5 million, while other research programs would receive \$35 million. The Administration had requested \$47.7 million for all research.
- Highway safety activities would receive \$10.4 million, contrasted with the \$12 million the Administration sought.
- The agency would receive \$13.8 million for general administrative purposes, instead of the \$16.3 million it requested.

A total of \$77 million, the amount requested by the agency, would be allocated for state and community highway safety programs administered by NHTSA. Out of that, the Appropriations Committee recommended to Congress that 36 percent be spent on alcohol safety, 9 percent on emergency medical services, 31 percent on police traffic services, 8 percent on traffic records, and 10 percent on other eligible programs. The remaining 5 percent would be available for grant administration.

Federal Highway Administration

The committee recommended the following for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) safety programs:

- \$14.5 million for the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, compared to the \$14.7 million requested.
- \$9 million for highway safety research and development, \$500,000 less than requested.
- A liquidating cash appropriation of \$23.3 million for highway related safety grants to states and communities, the same level requested by the administration and \$6.2 million less than last year's appropriation.
- An obligational limit of \$110 million on highway safety and school bus driver training programs, which if adopted would continue safety construction programs such as the High Hazard/Roadside Obstacles, Hazard Elimination, and Pavement Marking categories that had been eliminated in the DOT's earlier budget request.

DOT Curbs Distribution Of Safety Publications

Individuals who seek general information on highways or motor vehicle safety issues such as tire grading or child restraints are being turned away by the Department of Transportation (DOT) under a partial moratorium on the distribution of publications.

But if people ask for documents by specific title, they will probably be able to get them, a DOT spokesman told *Status Report*.

Since April 21, when the Office of Management and Budget told administrative agencies to review every audio-visual or published document, the DOT has instructed its member agencies not to disseminate public information unless requested by title. That moratorium is still in effect, *Status Report* has been told.

Agencies like the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) have been told to review public documents to seek ways to save money and to ensure they reflect only the policies of the current administration, said Thomas Blank, a staff member of the Secretary of Transportation's office, who is charged with overseeing the review.

NHTSA has completed its review, but the agency has not yet received permission to begin disseminating materials in response to general "fishing expeditions," Blank said. The affected publications and films cover diverse topics, ranging from bicycle safety to air bags and the 55 mph speed limit.

A complete listing of highway and motor vehicle safety publications is not available. However, a list of publications produced each year is contained in NHTSA's annual report. The most recent report, *Motor Vehicle Safety 1979*, DOT-HS 805-624, December 1980, may be obtained from NHTSA's Office of Public Affairs, 400 7th St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

Child Restraint TV Messages Win Honors

Two public service television messages produced by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety to demonstrate the benefits of infant and child restraint use have been awarded honors at the American Film Festival in New York City.

One message, entitled "Saving a Child's Life," showing the dangers of children riding unrestrained in vehicles, was the second-place winner in the video competition. Another, featuring infant carriers and entitled "Kindness Can Kill," was awarded honorable mention.

For information on the availability of the announcements, write or call Communications Department, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Watergate 600, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 333-0770.

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