

2008 Marks Record Year in Traffic Safety

California had a record-setting year in 2008 in traffic safety, combining educational programs, prevention and enforcement to make a big dent in traffic injury and fatality rates. The State's seat belt use rate hit an all time high of 95.7 percent for adults. This increase from 94.6 percent in 2007 indicates that an additional 350,000 people were buckling up in 2008. Child safety seat use also set a new state record of 94.4 percent, a significant increase from the 2007 rate of 87.7 percent.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the results we're seeing after a very busy year," said Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) Director Christopher J. Murphy. "Seat belt use has passed the 95 percent threshold and alcohol involved fatalities are down. I'm certainly hoping

to maintain this momentum as 2009 progresses so that we can point to even greater successes next year."

California also had the chance to take a look at the impact of the state's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law which took effect in January 2006.

A 2008 study, conducted by the Auto Club of Southern California, examined fatal and injury crashes where inexperienced teen drivers were at fault and found a significant decrease in the number of at-fault fatal and injury crashes.

"We're seeing a real synergy between the strengthening of

California's Seat Belt Use Rates		
	Adults	Teens
2008	95.7	89.6
2007	94.6	88.9
2006	93.4	90.8
2005	92.5	88.6
2004	90.4	82.5

California's Child Safety Seat Use Rates	
2008	94.4
2007	87.7
2006	87.8
2005	86.8
2004	89.6

our traffic safety laws, public education, enforcement and even prosecution," said Murphy. "If the trends we're seeing continue, I predict another great year." ●

News From the TSRP

This is the first in a continuing series of columns from the Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Program to appear in the OTS Tracks newsletter.

The mission of the *Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) Program* is to provide mentoring and training to prosecutors and law enforcement to enhance their ability to investigate, evaluate and successfully prosecute DUI and vehicular homicide cases. According to Program Director Creg Datig this is exactly what he and his team of prosecutors have accomplished in this past year.

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Message from the Director by Christopher J. Murphy



As we approach spring and the busy summer travel season just around the corner, I don't want to miss the opportunity to touch upon the many great successes of 2008. I knew it was a very busy year, but little did I know how many gains we would truly make.

To begin, OTS adopted a new vision statement – *Toward zero deaths, every 1 counts*. I believe this better reflects our commitment to not only lower deaths and injuries, but to eliminate them. It is our ultimate goal. California's 2007 Mileage Death Rate of 1.18 is the lowest rate since California started calculating this as a benchmark in 1946. In 2007, overall traffic fatalities decreased 6.2 percent from 4,236 in 2006 to 3,974 in 2007, representing the largest single year reduction since 1996-1997.

We continued to see significant progress in a number of areas, including seat belt use, DUI arrests and child safety seat use, among others. Seat belt use edged up from 94.6 percent in 2007 to 95.7 percent in 2008 and child safety seat use jumped from 87.7 percent in 2007 to 94.4 percent in 2008. Those two factors contributed a great deal to reducing injuries and preventing fatalities.

Alcohol impaired fatalities dropped 9.5 percent between 2006 and 2007, California's first year-to-year reduction since 1997-1998. In addition, OTS funded 1,469 checkpoints in 2008 — the most ever and 300 more than in 2007. Statewide DUI arrests also increased 3.4 percent to 203,866

in 2007 – the most DUI arrests since 1994.

Although we have seen significant improvements in many areas, motorcycle deaths is the one area that continues to grow while others drop. In response, OTS helped coordinate the Motorcycle Safety Summit last September and we are committed to carrying through with as many of the action plans as possible to find ways to turn this trend around.

OTS is also actively participating in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan process, with OTS staff represented on 10 of 16 Challenge Area committees and leading two of them.

On top of all that, OTS undertook two statewide assessments in 2008, three within a year's time. In addition to the Alcohol Assessment conducted in September 2007, we coordinated an Occupant Protection for Children Assessment and Motorcycle Safety Assessment in 2008.

Needless to say, we ended 2008 on a very high note and I have every confidence that 2009 will prove to be just as successful. We have a variety of new and innovative initiatives moving ahead, including an effort to keep pressure on the repeat offender by building on the *Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor* program, promoting license plate reader technology, pushing for increased vertical prosecution of DUI offenders and enabling probation departments to better supervise and monitor repeat and felony offenders.

In addition, we will be focusing on teen safety with projects that work, like *Every 15 Minutes, Real DUI Trials in Schools*, *Minor Decoy* and *Shoulder Tap* operations, expanding *Brief Interventions* in hospital emergency rooms to include adolescents and the *High School Seat Belt Challenge*.

This year we will also move into our second year of *Next Generation Click It or Ticket* with increased enforcement and education in both May and November, as well as increasing on-street and in-the-media presence of both DUI and seat belt enforcement through the mini grant programs.

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Arnold Schwarzenegger, *Governor*

BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION
AND HOUSING AGENCY
Dale E. Bonner, *Secretary*

OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY
Christopher J. Murphy, *Director*
Chris Cochran, *Editor*

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<http://www.ots.ca.gov>

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OTS Has a New Home

After more than 30 years in the same location, the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) headquarters had to move on, and everyone is happy we did. Over the years, OTS kept moving and expanding within a south Sacramento office park until we finally filled all the available space. After suffering with cramped quarters, no room to grow, leaking roof, windows and floors, broken plumbing and air conditioning that either ran at sweltering or freezing, we knew it was time to find a new home.

Since our mission demands more of us each year, we needed to find offices where we had enough space to undertake the best practices traffic safety in the most populous state in the nation demand. We needed room and infrastructure for computer equipment, staff, files, staff meetings and space for large groups of traffic safety professionals to easily come together to work on life saving issues.



The Office of Traffic Safety has moved to Elk Grove just off I-5 and Laguna Blvd.

We picked a spot that's easy to get to right off of Interstate 5 in the southern suburb of Elk Grove. It's new, water-tight, with space to work effectively and efficiently, and even sports artwork from several community artists that's changed every few months.

If you haven't already, make note of our new address and phone number.

2208 Kausen Drive, Suite 300
Elk Grove, CA 95758
(916) 509-3030 ●

Sacramento Kings Team Up to Flip the Chip

The Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) is planning a partnership with the NBA's Sacramento Kings to introduce *Flip the Chip* – a new public education program that will reach fans in-stadium and at local sports bars throughout the greater Sacramento area.

Although alcohol impaired deaths in California decreased 9.5 percent in 2007, impaired driving remains a top traffic safety concern. In an effort to continue to aggressively promote anti-DUI messages, OTS will partner with the Sacramento Kings to remind

fans to designate a sober driver through multiple promotional elements geared to engage males 21-34 – the largest group of DUI offenders.

“*The Flip the Chip* concept was originally developed by the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety with the Phoenix Suns in 2007,” said OTS Assistant Director for Marketing and Public Affairs, Chris Cochran. “We're taking the concept and modifying it to fit California and the Sacramento market.”



The program involves 50,000 poker-type chips that will feature anti-DUI messaging. Fans will *Flip the Chip* in

OTS Comings and Goings



William Terrell



Michele Meadows



Leslie Witten-Rood



Mitch Zehnder

Along with the move to new offices, the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) has seen staff changes in recent months, with new faces, new assignments, and an OTS mainstay off to retirement.

William Terrell, Assistant Director for Administration, settled into a well-deserved retirement at the end of 2008 after 22 years with OTS.

Bill started as Senior Accounting Officer Supervisor where he headed up the complicated intricacies of tracking federal, state and local accounting. As Assistant Director for Administration, he took on supervision of all the fiscal, support and administrative units within OTS. When there was an obscure but important legal, administrative, or procedural question, Bill either had the answer or knew where to get it.

There will be no rocking chairs in Bill's retirement, however. He is now able to do more of the two things he loves most – spending time with his extended family and officiating at area softball and football games. OTS will be still drawing upon his expertise, as he has recently returned to help out as a Retired Annuitant.

One person Bill will be working with closely is Michele Meadows, long time member of the OTS Operations unit and most recently Assistant Director for Operations for Northern California, who has moved into the Assistant Director for Administration position.

Leslie Witten-Rood, former Regional Coordinator for the Sacramento/Sierra Nevada region, has been promoted into the Assistant Director for Operations for Northern

California position. She brings a rich background, a keen eye for detail and a dedication to traffic safety to the job.

Leslie began her career at OTS in 2004. She has worked on several major initiatives, such as coordinating with the California District Attorneys Association to launch the most comprehensive Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor program in the nation. She worked with Dr. Leon Owens of Mercy San Juan Hospital and the Teachable Moment Foundation to institute pilot programs for “brief interventions” in hospitals, jails and for adolescents. Leslie came to OTS after ten years in the Governor's Office and State Legislature.

The latest addition to the OTS coordinator ranks to work with grantees is Mitch Zehnder, joining as an Operations Coordinator. ●

'Sacramento Kings,' from Page 3

order to designate a sober driver and then will be able to register the chip online for a chance to win various prizes. Program elements include online advertising throughout www.nba.com/kings, commercials on KXTV Channel 10 and Comcast SportsNet, PSA placement on King's radio, KHTK; in-stadium promotion at ARCO arena in Sacramento, local

bar participation, King's viewing parties and King's memorabilia!

“At the end of the day, it's all about promoting the use of designated drivers so fans make arrangements in advance to get home safely,” said Cochran. “We're excited about this promotion and believe the Sacramento Kings will help us save lives.”

The program is scheduled to launch during the 2009 NBA season in October 2009 and run through April 2010.

Look for more *Flip the Chip* information in the coming months at www.ots.ca.gov. ●



OTS Summit by the Bay April 8-10, 2009

After the past several years in Southern California, the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) is pleased to bring the 2009 Summit back to northern California and the Bay Area this spring.

“The San Francisco Marriott provides a great venue to gather and share best practices,” said OTS Summit coordinator, Donna Black. “We hope this year’s Summit is a valuable experience for our grantees and traffic safety partners, and that by holding it in a new location, we may engage some new faces as well.”

Sessions will include workshops on pedestrian and motorcycle safety, DUI enforcement and checkpoints,

technology, funding sources and OTS grant management, among many others. New for this year will be a session integrating social networking and traffic safety titled *It’s A Whole New World Out There – Communicating with New Audiences*, featuring Brandon Pierce from Facebook.

Thank you in advance to our 2009 Summit Partners: AAA Northern California, Allstate Insurance Company, Clear Channel, Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services, Safe Kids California & Safe Kids USA and Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.

We look forward to seeing you in San Francisco! ●



Next Generation Click It or Ticket

California has had great success with the *Click It or Ticket* seat belt enforcement campaign, increasing the state's seat belt use rate from 90.4 percent in 2004 to 95.7 percent in 2008. The enforcement campaign typically takes place in late May and early June, covering the peak travel period around Memorial Day.

In an effort to build on the success of the May campaign, a 'Next Generation' *Click It or Ticket* push is scheduled for mid-late November 2009, timed to coincide with the Thanksgiving holiday period.

"California launched the 'Next Generation' of *Click It or Ticket* last fall to maintain and help increase our seat belt use rates leading into the holiday travel and shopping season," said Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) Director Christopher J. Murphy. "Everything we can do to remind people to buckle up has a tremendous impact."

The fine for a seat belt violation in California has recently increased from a range of \$80 to \$91 to a set \$132.

OTS awarded \$3 million in traffic safety grants in support of the 'Next Generation' *Click It or Ticket* campaign. Look for 2009 seat belt data to be released later this fall. ●



'Director's Message,' from Page 2

Finally, you will also see a year-round statewide billboard campaign utilizing unsold remnant space featuring a variety of traffic safety

messages. Thanks to Clear Channel and CBS Outdoor for helping us realize the public service potential of this important effort.

The staff at OTS has a full plate this year and we welcome your input, suggestions and comments to help us realize our new vision – *Toward zero deaths, every 1 counts.* ●



First Statewide DUI Vehicular Homicide Conference

There has been other training on how to get convictions for DUI vehicular homicides, but none like what will be taking place in San Diego this June. The Office of Traffic Safety, together with the California District Attorneys Association, will bring together 200 participants from across the state, with equal numbers of prosecutors and law enforcement crash reconstruction professionals. This marks the first, largest and most comprehensive hands-on conference of its kind in the state.

Creg Datig, Director of the *Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor Program* and a leading expert in vehicular

homicide prosecution, stated, “Motor vehicles are among the deadliest weapons in California when they are in the hands of intoxicated or negligent drivers. This training is specifically designed to help police and prosecutors effectively pursue these cases and hold the offenders accountable, which will make our streets safer for everyone.”

The three day course is designed to assist prosecutors and law enforcement in developing the knowledge and skills necessary to investigate, evaluate, prepare, and handle cases involving DUI vehicular fatalities. Subjects will include California substantive law, collision

investigation and reconstruction, post-collision determination of speed, how kinematics can assist in driver identification, understanding expert testimony in these cases, cross-examining a defense expert, and basic toxicology.

Participants will be working on real cases and scenarios. John Kwasnoski, one of the most sought after crash reconstructionists and police-prosecutor trainers in the country will be one of the presenters. Although it’s the largest such training to-date, interest is high enough to limit many of the available slots to those with specific grant designations. ●

‘TSRP’ from Page 1

Through a grant from the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), the TSRP program team consisting of Program Director Creg Datig, five prosecutors and a public information officer has established five regional resource centers to provide assistance and training for prosecutors and law enforcement. In 2008, TSRP conducted forty-nine training programs attended by 1,786 prosecutors and local law enforcement personnel.

“This means that for the entire year of 2008 in the state of California, every eight days the TSRP team presented training to assist prosecutors and law enforcement officers in saving

lives by making our streets and highways safer,” said Datig.

Additionally, TSRP fielded over 1,000 individual requests for technical assistance from prosecutors and police officers, including calls to the new “TSRP Hotline” service that provides quick response via telephone in urgent situations.

The extensive training opportunities will continue throughout 2009. Regional TSRP prosecutors maintain continuing contact with local district attorney’s and city attorney’s offices and are creating new, specialized training programs that will be available throughout the state. The TSRP Program, in partnership with OTS,

will be presenting its annual DUI Toxicology and Vehicular Homicide Seminar this June for three and-a-half days in San Diego. This comprehensive program will provide intensive training in the investigation and prosecution of vehicular homicide cases, particularly those involving impaired drivers, and is open to law enforcement officers and prosecutors throughout California. A new TSRP Web site featuring DUI prosecution resources, TSRP contact information, a legal brief bank, and downloadable training videos will come online this spring. The contact for your regional TSRP prosecutor, as well as the number for the TSRP assistance hotline, can be found at www.ots.ca.gov/tsrp.pdf. ●

CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY

WHAT'S
AHEAD



April 8-10

OTS Summit

San Francisco, California

<https://www.cce.csus.edu/conferences/ots/summit09/>

May 1-31

National Bike Month (Bike to Work Day: May 16)

Contact: communication@bikeleague.org

<http://www.bikeleague.org/index.php>

May 1-31

Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

Contact: <http://nhtsa.dot.gov>

May 18-31

Next Generation *Click It or Ticket* Enforcement Mobilization

June 2-4

Vehicular Homicide Conference

San Diego, California

Contact: www.ots.ca.gov

June 7-13

Tire Safety Week

Contact: Dan Zielinski, RMA, (202) 682-4846, dzielinski@rma.org

http://www.rma.org/tire_safety/tire_maintenance_and_safety/national_tire_safety_week/



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