

Alaska



Highway Safety Office
2005 Annual Report



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Introduction

Crash Summary

In 2004, there were an estimated 14,500 traffic crashes on Alaska roadways, a slight increase from the previous year of 13,325 crashes. Montana held the VMT (fatalities/100million Vehicle miles Traveled) highway fatality lead in 2002 with 2.60 deaths. Although 15 other states were in between us, Alaska was not far behind at 1.82 VMT. Two years later, in 2004, our fatality rate had decreased to 1.46 VMT.

Accomplishments

During 2004, Highway Safety funds were distributed among law enforcement agencies, state agencies and national and community based service organizations, for projects dedicated to decreasing traffic crashes in Alaska. As data is gathered, many short-term objectives are being reached:

- Alaska's seat belt use rate rose from 64% in 2002 to 77% in 2004 and climbed to 78.4% in 2005.
- Increased public awareness of law enforcement with an increase in DUI arrests and fatalities dropping from 56 deaths in 2000 to 35 in 2003.
- Highway safety advocates and agencies are partnering on common issues through proven prevention, intervention and accountability practices to succeed in goals such as lowering Alaska's alcohol-related fatality rate, which has already dropped from 32.6% in 2003 to 30.5% in 2004.
- Rise in highway safety interest as the number of registered vehicles continues to increase, having gone from 737,000 in 2002 to 846,000 in 2004 (Alaska DMV).

Challenges

The need to enhance current data-driven projects has become a new priority for AHSO as we continue to build on positive relationships with law enforcement and other agencies. Our state lost 98 people in 2003 on Alaska's roads and another 101 people died in 2004. As of

July, 2005, there has been a major drop in fatalities with 28 deaths this year.

Being a state with a small population (only 644,000), a few fatalities make a big difference in our statistics. In 2004, two teenagers died and one became paralyzed from not wearing their seat belts in a speed-related crash. Nine months later speed was again a devastating factor in the small town of Homer when four young adults were killed. . Conversely, as small state, statewide efforts may be able to affect the crash totals more easily than in larger states.

The challenge continues to be how to reach all drivers with the information that will help them make the right choices when they get behind the wheel.

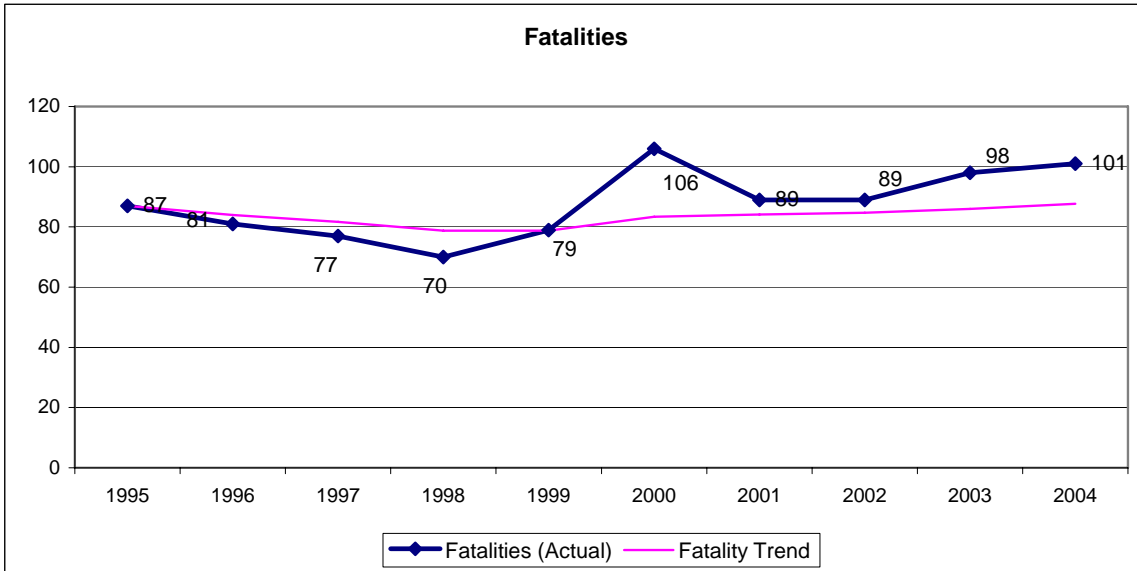
Crash Data / Trends

	Baseline Data 1995-1997				Progress Report Data 1998-2004					
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Fatalities (Actual)	87	81	77	70	79	106	89	89	98	101
Fatality Trend	87.0	84.0	81.7	78.8	78.8	83.3	84.1	84.8	86	87.7
Fatality Rate /100 million VMT	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.6	1.7	2.3	1.8	1.8	1.9	
Fatality Rate Trend	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8	
Injuries (Actual)	6059	5851	6257	6163	6081	6120	6543	6370		
Injury Trend	6059	5955	6056	6083	6082	6101	6153	6180		
Fatality & Serious Injury Rate/(100 million VMT)	14.3	13.0	14.9	13.0	10.7	11.1	10.9			
Fatality & Serious Injury Rate Trend	14.3	13.7	14.1	13.8	13.2	12.8	12.6	12.6		
Fatality Rate/100K Population	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1			
Fatality Rate Trend/100K Population	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1		
Fatal & Serious Injury Rate/100K population	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8			
Fatal & Serious Injury Rate Trend /100K population	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9		
Alcohol Related Fatalities	47	43	41	31	40	56	47	32	31	31
Alcohol Related Fatality Trend	47	45	44	41	40	43	44	43	41.2	39.9
Proportion of Alcohol Related Fatalities	54.0	53.1	53.2	44.3	50.6	52.8	52.8	47.9	32.6	
Alcohol Proportion Trend	54.0	53.6	53.4	51.2	51.0	51.3	51.5	49.9	47.9	
Alcohol Related Fatality Rate/100M VMT	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.7		
Alcohol Fatality Rate Trend	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0		
Percent of Population Using Safety Belts*	52.0	56.0	59.6	61.0	60.6	61.3	62.6	65.8	78.9	77.0
Safety Belt Use Trend	52.0	54.0	55.9	57.2	57.8	58.4	59.0	59.9	62.0	63.5

Performance Goals and Trends

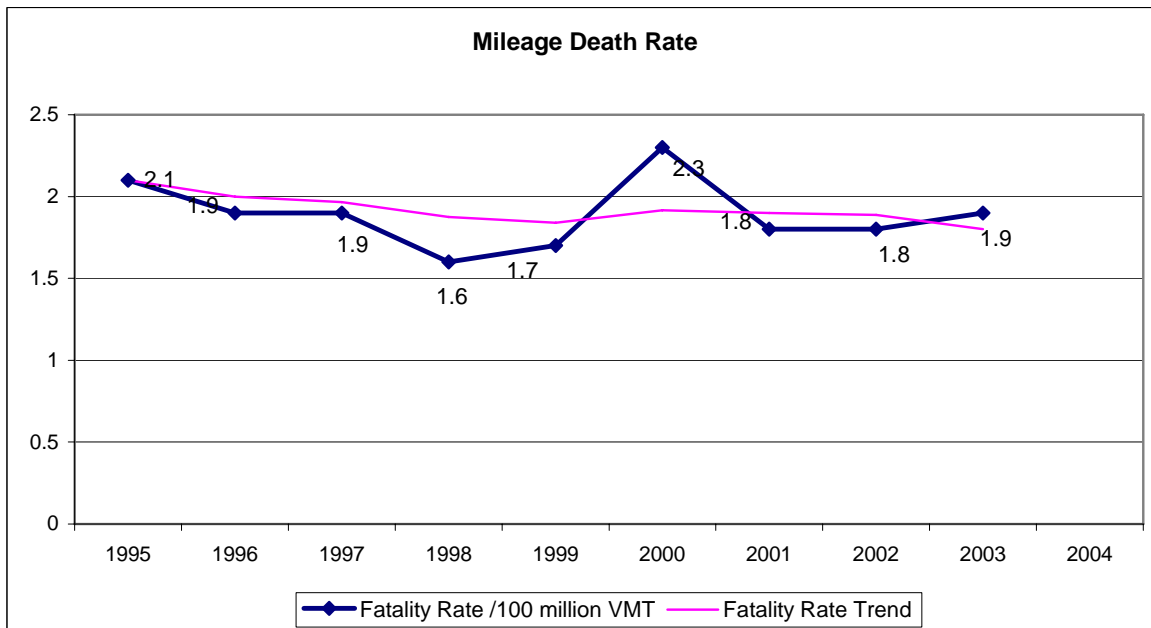
Fatalities

Goal: Reduce the number of fatalities from 89 in 2002 to 70 in 2008



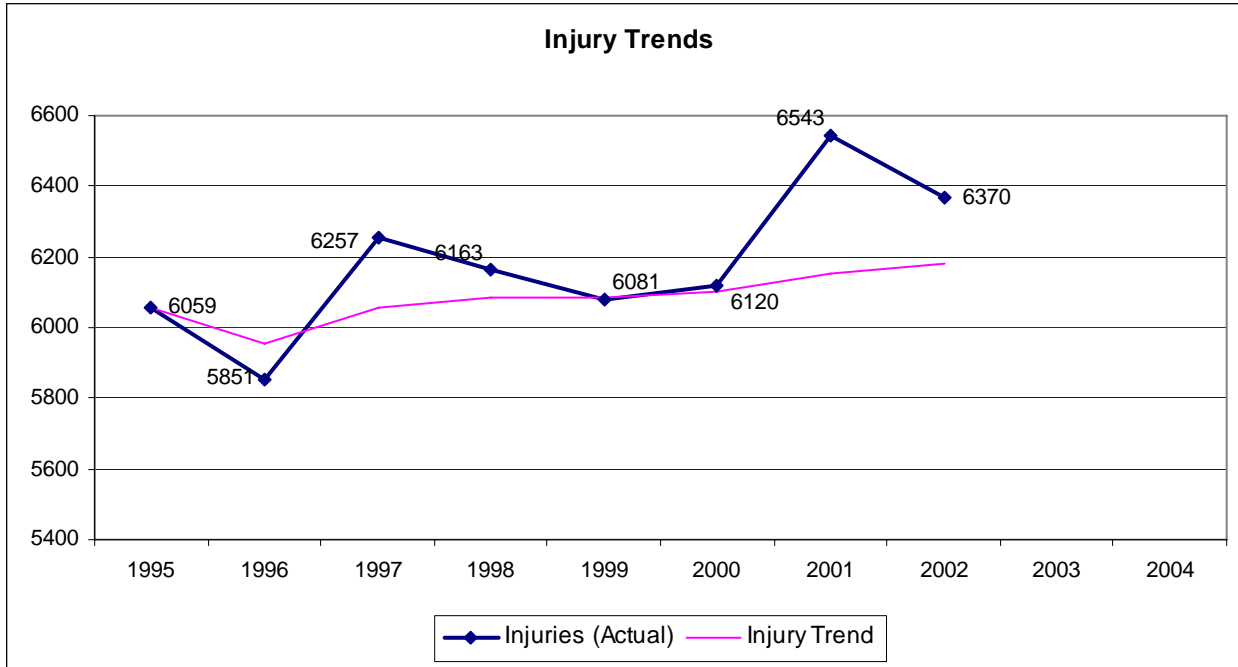
Fatality Rate/VMT

Goal: Reduce the Mileage Death Rate from 1.8 in 2001 to 1.7 in 2003



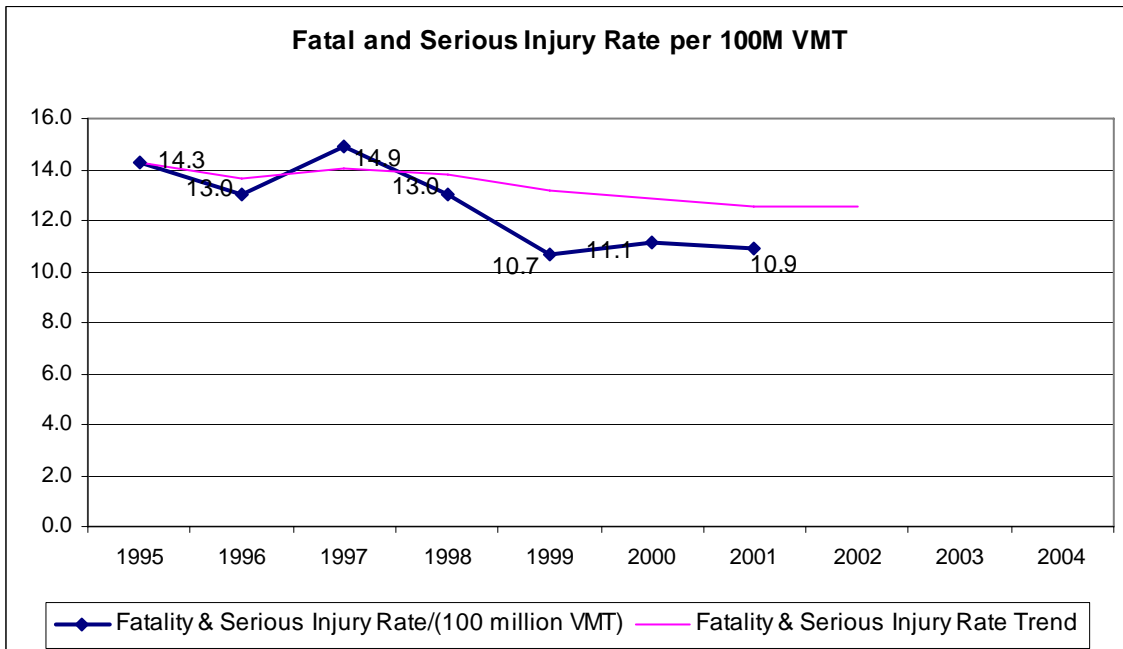
Injuries

Goal: Reduce the number of injuries sustained in crashes to 6,200 in 2003



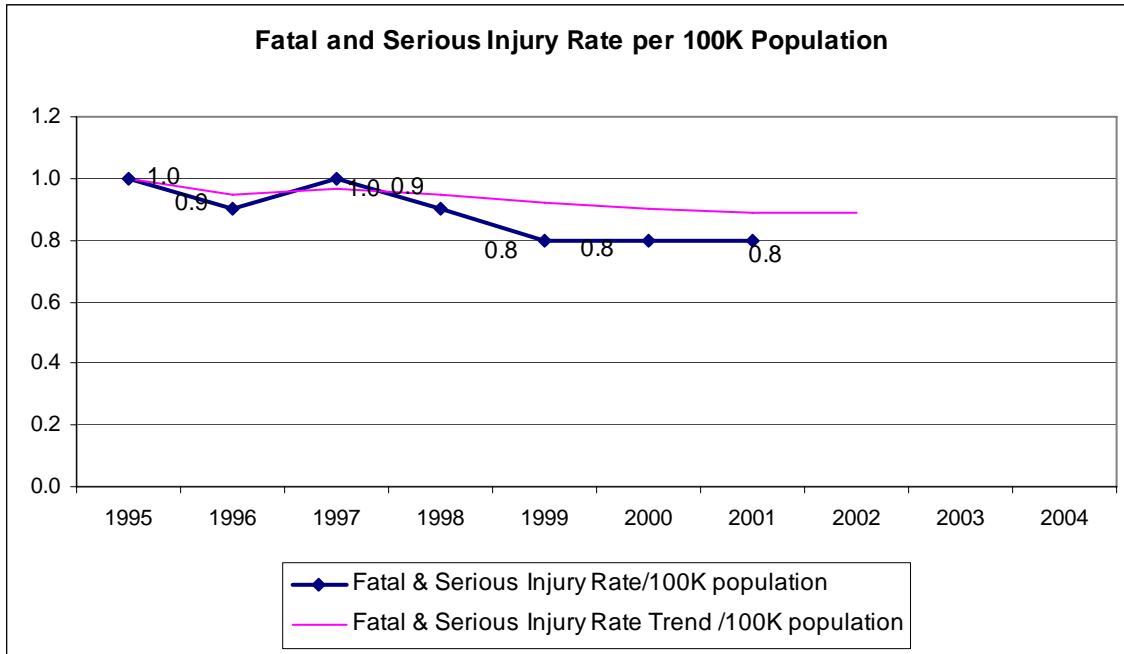
Fatal and Serious Injury Rate/100 VMT

Goal: Reduce the serious injury and fatality rate/100 VMT to below 10.0 in 2003



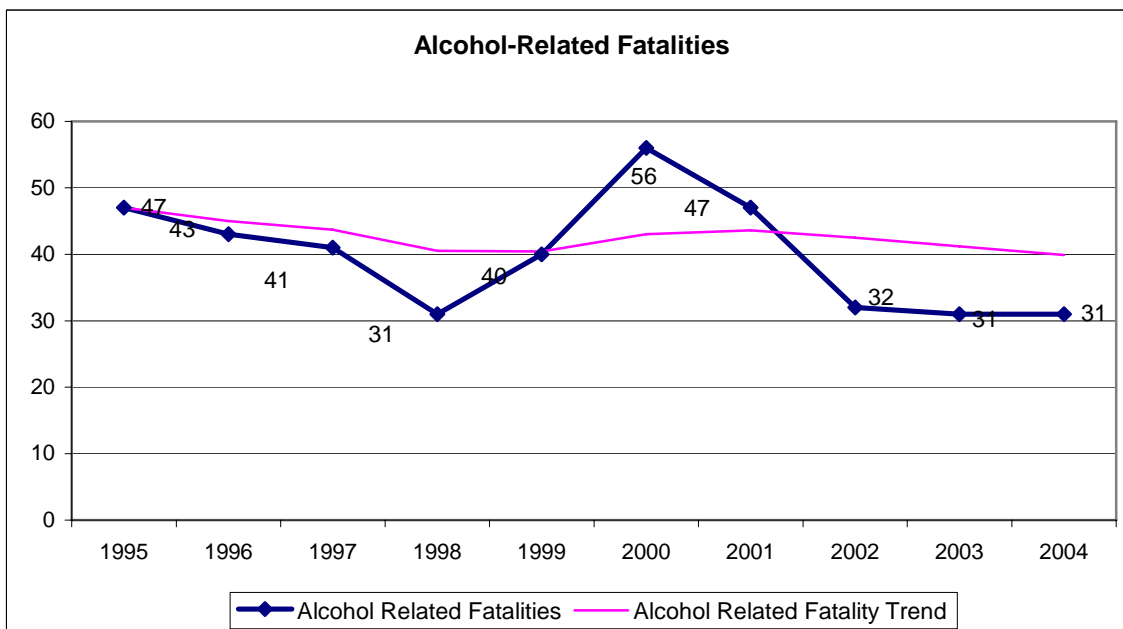
Fatal and Serious Injury Rate/100K Population

Goal: Reduce the fatality & serious injury rate/100k population to below .8 in 2003



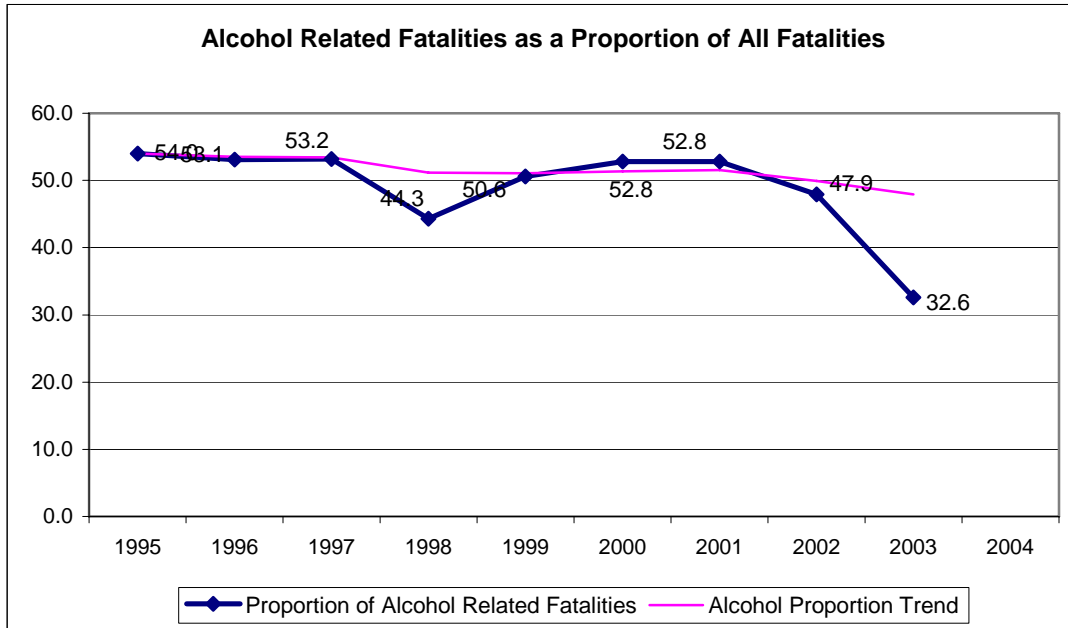
Alcohol-Related Fatalities

Goal: Reduce the number of alcohol-related fatalities from 47 in 2001 to 30 in 2003



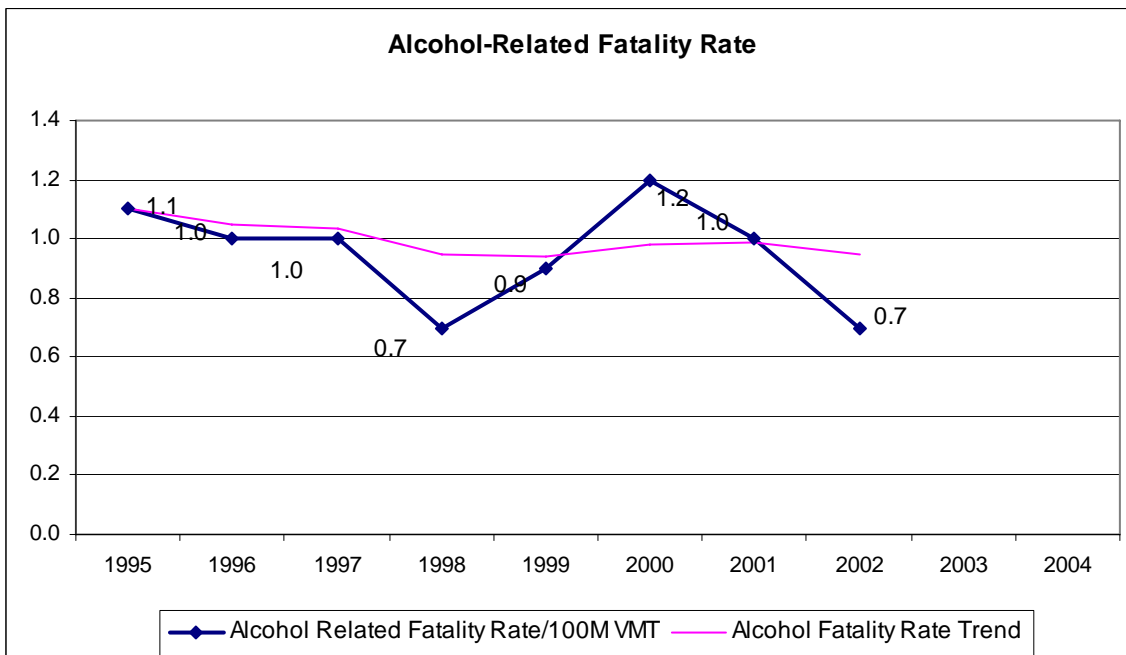
Alcohol-Related Fatality Proportion

Goal: Reduce the ratio of alcohol-related fatalities to 39.5% in 2003



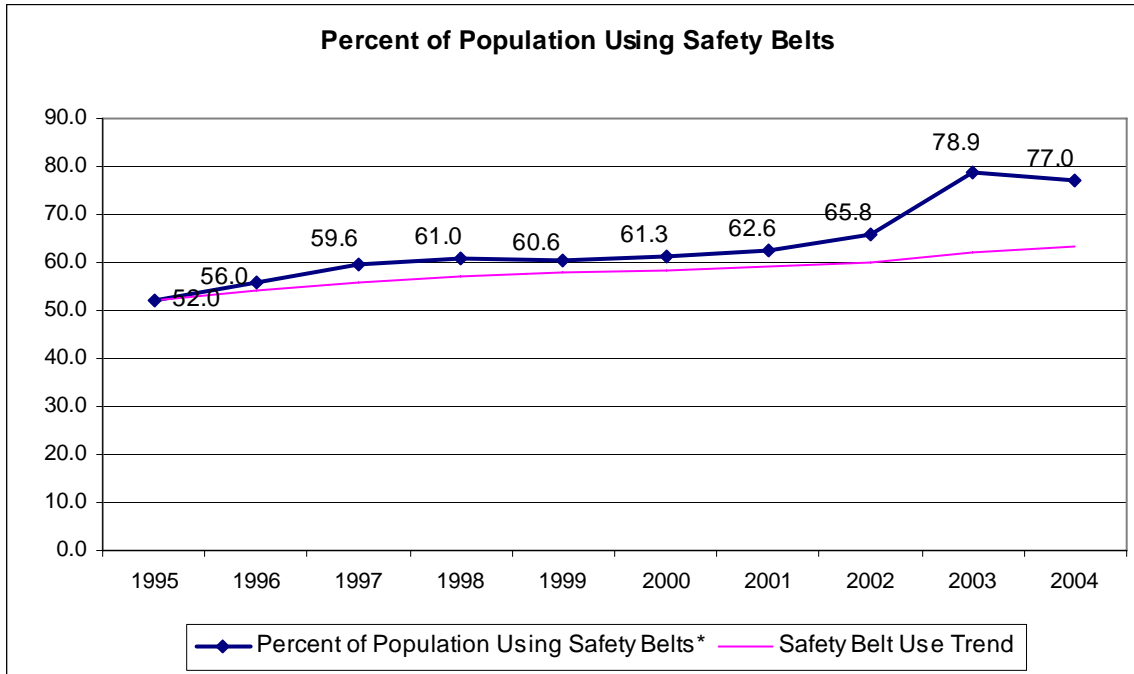
Alcohol-Related Fatality Rate

Goal: Reduce the alcohol-related fatality rate to below .7 in 2003



Safety Belt Use

Goal: Increase the seat belt use rate of all occupants to above 85% by 2005



Impaired Driving

Problem Statement: Alaska experiences high alcohol-related vehicular death rates with 31% of fatal collisions involving an impaired driver in 2003 and increasing to 34.1% in 2004.

Objectives

To decrease the alcohol-related fatality rate each year until impaired driving is no longer a problem.

Strategies

A data-driven combination of aggressive law enforcement and media campaigns which focus on DUI laws, drunk driving prevention and education issues. Impaired driving countermeasures are AHSO's top priority.

Enforcement efforts Police departments across the state receive funding for impaired driving projects such as DUI overtime patrols, Standard Field Sobriety Tests (SFST), Drug Evaluation & Classification (DEC) training. Effective enforcement and education increases community ownership of "You Drink & Drive. You Lose."



Alaska continues to be one of 15 participating states in the national Strategic Evaluation States (SES) Initiative. As part of the SES project, NHTSA initiated implementation and evaluation of the "You Drink & Drive. You Lose." program. As part of this effort, each of the 15 SES States received support from NHTSA to plan, publicize, and evaluate programs designed to reduce alcohol-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities.

Alaska's DUI enforcement team raises public awareness of the problem of drunk driving and increases the number of DUI arrests. Led by a Sergeant, three Troopers are funded with sanction funds which enable them to work shifts that maximize the likelihood of DUI contacts, and concentrate their activities in problem areas of the state. Target enforcement sites include special events that draw large numbers of people and have a history of problems with impaired driving—such as the state fair. The DUI team also conducts public relations and media activities, and makes educational presentations in schools and to community groups. The Alaska Injury and Prevention Center continues to collect data on the SES program. Hopefully at the end of this three-year project, the evaluation component will prove that

DUI specific patrols have a significant impact in lowering the number of alcohol-related crashes in the state.

From January 2005 to June 2005, the AST DUI team worked 3,210.5 hours and arrested 164 DUI's.

From July 2005 to October 2005, the AST DUI team worked 3,226.5 hours arresting 102 DUI's. When compared to the same time last year the DUI team worked over 7% more hours and had 10.5% fewer (114) DUI arrests.

Local Police Departments across Alaska participated in the "You Drink & Drive. You Lose." Campaign throughout 2005 through overtime and saturation patrols during traditionally heavy alcohol related fatalities and injuries holidays and events such as during the 4th of July and Memorial weekend. As of the week before Christmas the number of alcohol-related fatalities in Anchorage was at 50% less then their average fatality number

Court:

AHSO funds agencies in Anchorage and Juneau operate a Court Monitoring Program in which volunteers attend and provide data on all impaired driving arrests from arraignment to adjudication. Quarterly newsletters such the Juneau "DUI Digits" is reviewed by the public, judges and court-related agencies. This valuable data is the only shared document available to Alaska of the strengths and weaknesses in impaired driving court actions. National court records show that the mere presence of MADD activists in the courtroom will have a positive impact on stiffer sentencing for impaired driving offenders.

Alaska's Therapeutic Courts in Anchorage and Juneau are breaking the dangerous cycle of the repeat drunk driver by working together as a team. These Court Facilitators guide the legal system's star players which include a Judges, prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers and treatment providers. All members are trained and continually meet with other successful state Therapeutic Courts such as New Mexico. Monthly meetings allow the teams to address concerns and issues within the program and prove the commitment of each agency. After a period of jail time, selected high risk drivers sign a contract of agreement to enter Therapeutic Court. The program is 18 months long and consists of mandatory alcohol/drug testing, weekly court meetings with the Therapeutic team, aggressive 12-step program

attendance and intensive in-patient treatment. Their Alaska Therapeutic Court policy requires the imposition of probation as a deterrent which carries maximum jail time. Application for a Fairbanks Therapeutic Court is being favorably reviewed by AHSO as the community's court leader's step forward in preparation of reversing their high risk driver pattern.

Prevention and Education While law enforcement is a proven deterrent for unwanted driver behaviors, prevention education is also critical to the process: the public must have the information that impaired driving is illegal and dangerous. Groups such as MADD, the Alaska Injury Prevention Center, Choices for Teens, and the National Council on Alcohol and other Drug Dependence all implemented prevention/education projects through us this year in Alaska.



Our underage drinking programs focus on changing society's perception that drinking is a "rite of passage". Impaired drivers under the age of 21 are one of Alaska's largest groups of crash drivers. Both those that haven't had any trouble with alcohol and those who have already shown signs that they have a problem need access to information on how to avoid the problems that underage drinking brings.

Med's Protecting You/Protecting Me is the only science-based Best Practice program which teaches grades 1st-5th on the dangerous effects of alcohol on the developing brain. Five proven steps of protection for the child who does not have choice of being with an impaired driver are taught throughout the grades with great success. One attractiveness of PYPM is its flexibility; the 20-40 min. 8 week program can be taught by teachers, counselors or high school students and has been proven to be effective in preventing or reducing underage drinking and teen drunk driving in inner-city schools across the nation. Last year PYPM went online, allowing for smaller populated rural areas to participate. AHSO's PYPM statewide program is continues to train Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau teachers, counselors and peers with the goal of becoming a state-wide accepted program in all public schools including villages.

The MADD Anchorage Chapter Youth in Action (YIA) and the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (NCADD) Juneau Chapter Teens in Action (TIA) are two organizations educating Alaskans about "zero tolerance". Facts such as minor consumption quadruples the chances of serious alcohol problems, the high level of

teen alcohol-related crashes including injuries and fatalities are consistently used throughout project.

Teens participate in activities such as:

- ❖ Victim Impact Panels
- ❖ Educating and assisting grade school youth on projects
- ❖ Educating elected officials on related public policy issues
- ❖ Speaking to adult organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis
- ❖ Placing warning labels re: alcohol to minors on alcohol bottles
- ❖ Creating media campaigns
- ❖ Working w/ adult organizations during fall “Red Ribbon” campaign
- ❖ Teaming with the ABC division to conduct shoulder taps
- ❖ Conduct underage drinking compliance checks on liquor licensees

Results

The alcohol-related fatality rate dropped in 2001 from 52.8% to 38.2% in 2002, 32.6% in for 2003 and continued its descent to reside at 31% in 2004.

Future Strategies

Using both enforcement and prevention education countermeasures, we will continue to fund innovative and proven strategies which work to solve the problem. AHSO will be encouraging implementation of successful programs which have their roots in other states. AHSO will be supporting agencies with program adjustments to ensure success at the varied highway safety knowledge levels among our state communities.

Funding Sources: NHTSA Section 154 AL, 157incentive and 402 funds

Problem Statement

Despite proof that wearing a seatbelt improves the chances of surviving a crash—and ultimately could save thousand of dollars per crash—a significant number of Alaska's residents do not use seatbelts.

Additionally, child safety seats are often not used and those that are often improperly installed.



Objective

To increase the statewide seatbelt and child safety seat use rates.

Strategies

To focus resources allocated to increasing seatbelt use on enforcement, media, and education while also providing a more cohesive network of child passenger safety resources statewide.

Seatbelts The focus of our statewide program is the "Click It Or Ticket" (CIOT) campaign that combines high visibility enforcement with a paid media campaign. Municipal police departments and all of the State Trooper (AST) detachments participated in the enforcement blitz, and AST's Public Information Office produced the media that was aired statewide. The campaign reached approximately 85% of Alaska's population. The campaign succeeded in making more people aware of seat belt use, and most Alaskans now know they'll get a ticket if they don't buckle up. We found that, bolstered by the support given in the media, even police officers not formally part of the campaign were more likely to write seat belt tickets.

An enhancement of the CLOT campaign was consistent and comprehensive actions taken by local safety advocates. Teens and 16-34 year old males were the target audiences for a variety of AHSO and NHTSA approved educational campaigns. Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks, Soldotna, Ketchikan and Sitka all participated in teen incentive projects during the CIOT campaign. In Anchorage, teen seatbelt use was studied. Pre-surveys were done, then, while the State was being bombarded with enforcement messages, teen drivers with all occupants in their car buckled up were awarded with incentives such as gift certificates donated by local merchants. Additionally, some Anchorage school classes received seat belt presentations by a trauma nurse. When post-surveys were completed, data showed higher increases in seatbelt use occurred at the schools where a trauma nurse made safety presentations.



Child Passenger Safety In addition to CIOT activities, our Child Passenger Safety program is reaching more Alaskan's than ever before. The Alaska Injury Prevention Center continues to collaborate with the local Safe Kids Coalition and maintains a check station at their offices. Through this one location, over 1000 calls for CPS information were logged, hundreds of seats were checked, convertible and booster seats were distributed, new technicians were trained, and technicians received update training.

The Fairbanks Safe Rider program increased the number of car seat checks in Fairbanks and the interior resulting in an increase in the correct usage of child restraints. The program provided check-up events in the Fairbanks area.

Results

Reaching an all-time high rate of 78.4% of seat belt users, Alaska's occupant protection program showed a great deal of progress. Both our adult and child restraint programs continue to flourish this year, and we intend to continue with our current strategy.

Future Strategies

We plan to continue to build on the successes we've had this year by expanding the CIOT campaign. The continuance of educating the general public with special attention towards the novice driver and the high risk driver, and the implementation of a statewide CPS program are examples of attacking the problem from all sides. These data-driven programs continue to be the best strategy for improvement.

Funding Sources: NHTSA Section, 157innovative and 402 funds

Paid Media Summary FY '05

Campaign & Dates	TV Spots	Radio Spots	Print Ad	Other Media	Audience Size	Evaluation / Results	Funding Source	Amount(s)
YD&DYL 12/13/04 – 1/3/05	1,021 Paid <u>326 Bonus</u> 1,345 Total	1,135 Paid <u>879 Bonus</u> 2,004 Total	37 Paid	None	Statewide: 620,000	Alcohol-related fatalities decreased to a level below the national average in 2004.	Section 154 AL	TV: \$55,696 Radio: \$9,750 Print: \$11,009
CIOT 5/16/05 – 5/30/05	1,006 Paid <u>236 Bonus</u> 1,242 Total	1,063 Paid <u>802 Bonus</u> 1,865 Total	None	None	Statewide: 620,000	Seat belt use increased to 78.4%, a 2% improvement over 2004 rates.	Section 157 Innovative	TV: \$64,989 Radio: \$9,731
YD&DYL 6/20/05 – 7/4/05	None	1,483 Paid <u>1,080 Bonus</u> 2,463 Total	None	None	Statewide: 620,000	Preliminary FARS data shows a decrease in the number of alcohol-related fatalities in Alaska.	Section 154 AL	TV: \$0 Radio: \$14,743
YD&DYL 8/17/04 – 9/4/05	395 Paid <u>229 Bonus</u> 694 Total	1,093 Paid <u>692 Bonus</u> 1,785 Total	None	None	Statewide: 620,000	Preliminary FARS data shows a decrease in the number of alcohol-related fatalities in Alaska.	Section 154 AL	TV: \$37,958 Radio: \$11,955
CIOT 9/16/05 – 10/2/05	512 Paid <u>281 Bonus</u> 793 Total	810 Paid <u>560 Bonus</u> 1,370 Total	None	None	Statewide: 620,000	Preliminary FARS data shows a decrease in the number of alcohol-related fatalities in Alaska.	Section 154 AL	TV: \$0 Radio: \$9,720

Paid Media Summary

Problem Statement

Enhanced enforcement efforts are not significantly effective if the members of the public do not know—or at least have the perception—that their chances of being caught have increased.

Objective

To increase the awareness of enhanced enforcement efforts surrounding the Drive Hammered – Get Nailed and CIOT campaigns in order to increase the public’s perception of the likelihood of being caught if they do not comply with the State laws.

Strategies

Based on the National strategy for combining enforcement and paid media, media was purchased for Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection campaigns. Non-paid public service announcements were used in conjunction with the paid advertising to further the support for the campaign goals.

- For both campaigns, Alaska-specific ads, produced by the Troopers Public Information office, were run statewide on popular radio and TV stations accessible by all of Alaska.
- During the CIOT campaign, a survey showed an increase of 22% between pre and post-surveys surrounding the May Mobilization for people who had heard of the enforcement program. Alaska’s record seat belt use rate of 78.4% this year adds validity to the survey.
- Local media spots aired on television and radio in prime-time spots, and print ads were placed in newspapers. Television ads were frequently aired as non-paid prime-time spots when other spots were purchased. It’s estimated that the paid media spots reached over 80% of the population.



Results

We found that both the “Click It Or Ticket” (CIOT) and “Drive Hammered Get Nailed” enforcement campaigns benefited from the increased media presence.

Between pre and post surveys surrounding the May Mobilization, the CIOT campaign showed a significant increase of people who had heard of the enforcement program. Of course, Alaska’s record seat belt use

rate of 77% in 2004 and this year's rate of 78.4% validate the survey results and gives strong support for the media/enforcement campaign method.

From the pre and post-surveys for the DUI campaign, the number of people correctly identifying the Drive Hammered Get Nailed project name almost tripled while the general awareness of a DUI enforcement crackdown remained consistent.

Anecdotal reports from the Troopers stated that they were making fewer DUI arrest during the Drive Hammered Get Nailed media blitz periods, giving additional support to the idea that people were seeing the ads and paying attention to the fact that if they drove drunk, they'd get caught.



Funding Sources: NHTSA Section 157innov. and 154 AL funds
NHTSA SES funds

Other Noteworthy Projects

Project Title: Traffic and Criminal Software (TraCS)
Target: Law Enforcement, Data Processors, and Data Users
Program Area: Traffic Records

Problem Statement

Currently, Alaska's highway safety-related data is often late, inaccurate, and difficult to access. The manual processing of data forms allows for frequent errors and consumes valuable resources that would be better used elsewhere.

Objectives

The goal of the project is to increase the quality of Alaska's safety data through investment in proven technologies enhancing the ability to:



- Provide more efficient means of collecting accurate data
- Deliver integrated data management solutions capable of incorporating multiple field-based reporting areas (such as motor vehicle crash forms, motor carrier safety inspections, citations, Implied Consent (DUI) forms, and incident reports)
- Allow the in-vehicle hardware unit to function as both a mobile data terminal (MDT/MDC) to communicate with the computer-aided dispatching (CAD) system and as the unit for field-based reporting
- Transmit data and images from both local and state law enforcement agencies to administrative offices in order to eliminate redundant data entry and expedite data processing
- Increase the efficiency of analyzing and distributing accurate safety data to the user community by providing quality, timely data to the users in hours instead of days and weeks
- Increase the amount of time an officer can spend on patrol by decreasing the amount of paperwork

Strategies

TraCS is the primary effort to improve data quality and availability

Results

Still in process, the Kenai Police Department is designing an electronic version of the motor vehicle crash form for TraCS. Patrol officers will test a draft version of the form, while state agencies, such as DOT, prepare their systems to begin receiving the electronic data. Further testing of the system will involve Juneau, Fairbanks, and Palmer police departments with the goal of being fully on-line by FFY 2006.

Funding Source(s): NHTSA Commercial Vehicle Data Grant
NHTSA Section 411



Project Title: Anchorage Safe Communities

Target: Vehicle occupants, teens, pedestrians & bicyclists

Program Area: Safe Communities

Problem Statement

The Anchorage area needs an active, highway safety oriented organization to provide services and coordinate activities in the community and to help with statewide initiatives.

Objectives

Child Passenger Safety

- Increase the number of CPS technicians and CPS educated law enforcement officers in South-central Alaska
- Increase the number of properly installed child safety seats in South-central Alaska
- Increase the number of children using booster seats appropriately
- Increase the number of certified CPS Technicians
- Work to add booster seat language to the current CPS law

Click It Or Ticket

- Increase media/public awareness surrounding Buckle Up events
- Teach 200 students about the physics of car crashes
- Increase the seat belt use rate of teens

Teens and Alcohol Use

- Teach parents and teachers to be media literate and assist them with developing media literacy lessons for their children/students
- Facilitate Teen and Sober events during the high-risk driving seasons such as graduation and prom
- Provide Fatal Vision lessons to as many teens as possible
- Provide parents with resources to "know what their kids are up to"

Bicycle and Pedestrian

- Provide education and helmets for young bicycle riders
- Increase the number of children wearing reflectorized clothing
- Provide reflectorized hats to homeless people in Anchorage

Strategies

AIPC employs numerous strategies to achieve their objectives, but their primary strategies are good ideas backed by the ability to make the idea become reality.

All of AIPC's projects involve partnerships with other organizations sharing common goals. The CPS projects work with the Safe Kids Coordinator who does not have time on her own to do all of the scheduling and seat checks required. Teen events are held in conjunction with the School District, MADD, Akeela, or others with vested interest in the issue. CIOT strategies were collaborated by AHSO, APD and AST. AIPC understands that community projects must have buy-in from others in the community in order to succeed.

Results

Better-than-expected results were achieved in this year's projects. Staff turnover brought new energy and new ideas allowing for increased productivity. Examples: 1000 more teens received the seat belt presentation than originally thought due to increased participation from teachers; forty media spots/week were purchased for highway safety messages on the local traffic network, but the actual spots played per week was 89, and announcers would often be heard to end their broadcast with an unsolicited "Click It Or Ticket!"; and more safety seats were distributed than originally planned.

Funding Source(s): NHTSA Section 402, 154 AL and 405a funds



Project Title: Bicycle/pedestrian Mini-Grants

Target: Pedestrians & bicyclists

Program Area: Ped/Bicycle

Problem Statement

In 1997, 223 bicycle-vehicle crashes occurred in Alaska—prompting concerned citizen groups to get organized and raise awareness about bicycle safety. Since then, the bicycle crash rate is lower, and in 2002, no bicyclists were killed in traffic collisions. Maintaining that success is the challenge.

While bicyclists have been a main focus recently, Alaska's pedestrian fatality trend is increasing and needs more attention in coming years.

Objectives

- Identify individuals and groups concerned about bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Distribute bicycle safety information and helmets statewide
- Target at-risk age groups of Alaska youth with educational safety messages and training

Strategies

Mini-grants of \$750 were made available to organizations promoting bicycle and pedestrian safety through bicycle safety rodeos and safety presentations in schools.

Results



Funds were distributed to towns and villages across Alaska reaching over 2,000 youth with bicycle safety information. Hands-on skills were taught at bike rodeos, and information was passed on in lecture-type settings. In some cases whole villages received training and helmets so youth are more likely to avoid the “not cool” stigma that often keeps kids from wearing helmets.

One notable situation occurred in Wrangell: after a safety rodeo took place, one of the organizer’s child was hit by a car while riding his bike. He fell and hit his head, but because he was wearing his newly fitted helmet and safety gear, he suffered only minor injuries – the helmet suffered much more severe damage.

Funding Source(s): NHTSA Section 402 funds

Looking Forward

While we are satisfied with our many accomplishments this year, we, as highway safety advocates, also clearly see that we have a long way to go. Statistics for 2004 are not complete, though we already know that we have almost the same number of fatalities as we did in 2003. Being a state with a small population (only 644,000), a few fatalities make a big difference in our statistics. Conversely, as a small state, statewide efforts may be able to affect the number crashes more easily than in

larger states. If we can decrease, even a little, the number of crashes involving alcohol, our traffic fatalities would be significantly reduced.

Passing highway safety legislation poses a significant challenge for us. Like most people, Alaskans, including many of our public officials, tend not to like being told what to do. An example would be the history of primary seat belt legislation. Because of the language of our Alaska state constitution, we have victimized ourselves to the point where almost every Alaska family has witnessed a highway tragedy. The result is that there is an increased number of elected officials who are highway safety advocates due to their own personal stories. For others, it will always be contingent on monetary incentives for their districts and highway safety advocates take this into consideration when providing public policy information.

Working in partnership with the court system continues to have successful results. Through court monitoring of DUI charges and a high risk driver offender program, awareness and education has been possible for both participants and public. What was recently un-chartered territory is now becoming one of the many proven solutions for our community's problem with impaired driving. NHTSA's support from the National level will be invaluable in supporting our local efforts.

The Alaska Safety Office is in the process of having a Policy and Procedures Manual created, which will include revised job descriptions, creation of a program timeline and proper agency management guidelines. The previous manual was in 1996 when the office was under the Department of Public Safety. Over the past two months AHSO has been working under the close guidelines of the NHTSA Pacific Northwest Regional office to meet the 2005 NHTSA Review recommendations which will result in AHSO becoming a leading state in our nation's battle for highway safety.