

14 Metre RV's Communications Framework

A Guide for Canadian Jurisdictions

Prepared for CCMTA

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14 Metre RV's Communications Framework

Overview

Background

On April 27, 2004, the Council of Deputy Ministers approved a change to the national standards for vehicle weights and dimensions to amend the Intercity Motor Coach category to include recreational vehicles such as motor homes, thus allowing them to be up to 14 metres (45 feet) in length.

The Council directed CCMTA to ensure there are no concerns with driver licensing for the longer RV's. Previously, motor homes could be up to 12.5 meters (41 feet) in length.

In May of 2004, the CCMTA Standing Committee on Driver and Vehicles recommended, and the Board approved, the following:

1. no changes to the licensing classification with respect to RV's be made, and
2. an ad-hoc working group made up of ON, BC, and AB and industry representatives be formed to assess and develop educational materials for both RV drivers and other road users.

Target Audience

Communications should be targeted (but not limited to) the following segments of the population:

Primary

- Drivers of recreational vehicles over 41 feet
- Drivers using highways in North America during peak travel months

Secondary

- Drivers of recreational vehicles under 41 feet
- General Public

Specific Communications Strategies

The working team recommends a combination of earned and paid messaging:

Media Outreach Strategies

A media message is especially compelling to the target audience if it is presented through trusted news professionals, rather than through paid advertising. News media stories and public affairs programming gain credibility that cannot be achieved through paid messages. While news media outreach does not guarantee a successful communication campaign, such coverage can play a substantial role in effectively communicating campaign messages. There are few substitutes for an article in a major daily newspaper, a feature story on the network or local television evening news, or a radio talk show that examines the issue in depth. Media stories can help bring an issue to life, particularly when delivered to an audience by peers or other people they identify with.

Jurisdictions are encouraged to:

Consistently communicate interesting and useful story information to media that reach specific target audience segments.

Recreational Vehicle owners and drivers favour certain magazines, listen to particular radio stations, and watch certain programs. This differentiation and segmentation of media by different target audiences must be a key consideration in all news media outreach and relevant materials need to be tailored to meet those specific needs.

Build and maintain ongoing relationships with both national and regional media.

Good relationships are important to ensure continuing media coverage. They can be developed by continually providing the media with useful and timely information/trends and program evaluation information, as well as with appropriate feature story suggestions tailored to their audiences' interests.

Creatively pursue both hard news and feature story placements.

It is important to pursue opportunities to dispel myths and clarify the facts surrounding the issue of the drivers of large RV's through "hard" news and feature stories. This will reinforce key messages and establish the relevancy of the issue.

Manage issues and prepare for the unexpected.

Unexpected issues will inevitably arise. The key is to be aware of these issues, prepare appropriate responses, maintain communication with the media, and utilize ties with key stakeholders (such as representatives of partner organizations) that can provide communication support through spokespeople and related roles. The guiding principle for any such response will be to consistently provide factual information with the goal of reducing the collision rates of senior drivers.

Turn-key Information Kits

To extend the messages and activities of the campaign into each jurisdiction, the appendix includes some sample media releases that can be tailored to each jurisdiction, and used primarily ahead of key holiday driving peaks. Jurisdictions are encouraged to prepare whatever statistical data is available to enhance the messages, for example: crash rates, numbers of RV's, etc.

Communication Tactics

1. **Integrated communications team(s)** Roundtable discussions with representatives from organizations with a vested interest in the recreational driver issue should be convened to ensure a broad range of perspectives are taken into consideration prior to the development and delivery of specific communications initiatives. At the same time, this group could provide valuable feedback during the evaluation phase of any given project. **(team struck Summer of '04 and ongoing)**
2. **Define strategy** The team should develop a clearly defined integrated communications plan **(draft version produced October '04)**.
3. **Provincial campaign launch** An official campaign launch provides a tremendous opportunity to place the issue on the public agenda. The launch should highlight all the major elements of the campaign-from advertising and news media outreach to partnerships and online activities. **(timing based on jurisdictional needs)**
4. **Consistent messaging/materials** Efforts should be made to standardize certain communications with the goal of providing better products and services and eliminating duplication and overlap. This recommendation is targeted to any agency (e.g., Jurisdiction's Department of Highways, Health, etc.) responsible for the development of safety-related publications/messaging or which is responsible for responding to road safety related public inquiries. **(draft materials produced October '04)**
5. **Strategic material distribution** Jurisdictions will be encouraged to include the messaging in their communications with drivers, i.e. with renewal notices, online, etc.
6. **News media outreach** The news media can help to credibly communicate the issues relevant to driving large RV's through stories they consider compelling, timely, and of interest to their audiences. Many members of the media are also enthusiastic about making a clearly positive impact on the quality of life in Canada by reporting or depicting "good news" stories, or "news you can use," modelling constructive behaviour that may be useful to audiences. The jurisdiction should consistently provide the media with newsworthy, interesting facts and compelling feature story suggestions. Consistent outreach to media should take place through means that are most useful and appropriate (including background briefings, spokesperson availabilities, news conferences, press kits, online information, etc.).
7. **Integration of emerging technologies** When developing publications, the agency responsible should ensure their publications could be electronically distributed.

Key Messages/Strategies

- Communications should clearly articulate the importance of using common sense when driving (or sharing the road with) a large recreational vehicle.
- Campaigns should target drivers of large RV's at key peak periods (late spring, and mid-fall)
- Communications should focus on the concept of 'refreshing' driving skills as opposed to learning new skills.
- Communications should note courses are available, provided by both public and private organizations, relating to driving RV's. Information could highlight these local courses and provide examples of courses available in the respective jurisdiction.
- Communications should be customized to situations in the respective jurisdictions (for example urban driving, rural driving, mountainous driving).
- Communications should also address any recent local media issues particularly relating to accidents involving RV's

Key Stakeholders

National

- Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association of Canada
- Canadian Recreational Vehicle Association

Local

- Motor Vehicle Licensing Authority
- Retirement Organizations
- Seniors Organizations



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CONTACT

DATE

Are You Ready to Hit the Road? **<<Jurisdiction>> urges Recreational Vehicle Owners to Drive Safely** **(and for other drivers to give them a break!)**

It's that time of year again: all over the Province, folks are dusting off their recreational vehicles and getting ready to hit the highways of North America. For a week, or for 6 months, it's a great time to dust off your skills too! Here are some tips gathered from driver and vehicle authorities all across the country:

- How big is your unit? Make sure you know the dimensions of your vehicle, so that when you're facing a tight spot, you're confident of the clearance.
- What can you see? If you don't know where your blind spots are, you're not going to be able to maneuver safely. It's surprising how many park operators cite backing up as the number one cause of accidents in their parks!
- Do you share the road? Help keep road rage down by pulling over occasionally if vehicles are building up behind you.
- Do you use your mirrors? Expert commercial truck drivers say you should check your mirrors every 30 seconds or so, even if driving in wide-open highways.
- How fast can you reduce your speed? Brake fade can occur when brakes are over-used, so make sure you're shifting into lower gears when travelling downhill.
- And, of course, always wear your seatbelt!

But what about the rest of us? We, too, need to remember a few things about sharing the road with RV's:

- Give them space. By allowing plenty of following distance, you will give yourself a wider range of vision.
- If stopped on a hill behind a large vehicle, remember that it may roll backwards when the driver releases his brake, so leave lots of room.
- Keep clear of blind spots: make sure you can see both of the vehicle's mirrors so you can be sure he can see you.
- Make sure you allow enough space when passing longer vehicles, and leave extra room when you pull back in. Big vehicles take longer to slow down.
- Make room for turns: some large vehicles need to move into the centre in order to navigate safely.

<<Mr./Ms. of XYZ Jurisdiction>> urges drivers to take the advice of the professionals, and keep safe this summer!



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