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17 March 2015

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Ref: 2015 CCMTA-POLICE PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Please find attached documentation in support of the nomination of:

Distracted Driving Initiatives

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This nomination is supported and endorsed by J.V.N. (Vince) Hawkes, Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police. In support of this nomination, I offer the following information to the Awards Committee.

The Nomination Report

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Identification/Analysis of a Traffic Safety Concern

In September of 2010, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) recognized that distracted driving had become a significant traffic safety issue. Fatal collisions, which had traditionally been attributed to speed, alcohol and lack of occupant restraint, were now also being attributed to distracted driving. Driver distractions can include: cell phones, eating, drinking, changing a CD, fiddling with radio dials, talking to a passenger, experiencing emotional distress, minding children, personal grooming, looking at billboards or even other vehicles on the road. There are many types of distractions including physical, cognitive, and a combination of the two.

Starting in 2008, the OPP identified 88 fatal collisions, out of a total of 288 fatal collisions, which were attributed to distracted driving. This was second only to speed related collisions which were at 100.

The 2009 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report indicated that inattentive driving, or distracted driving, had been underreported, and "...continued trends point to the potential for greater fatalities than drinking and driving by 2014".

Data had to be collected to identify the extent of the problem, and to provide a benchmark in order to measure the impact of the proposed distracted driving strategy. Observational studies were coordinated in a number of OPP detachment areas to collect benchmark data that could be used to compare current compliance rates versus future compliance rates. This was the first OPP initiative, of this scale, to collect such data. After reviewing the data, it was determined that young drivers were most at risk for distracted driving.

Changing driver behavior is a very complex problem, and in order to address this issue, the OPP capitalized on lessons learned by the National Highway Traffic Administration and the results of a 2010 study in two major U.S. cities. The study supported high visibility enforcement, combined with strategic communications as the most effective method of reducing distracted driving. Hand-held cell phone use, while driving, dropped 56% in Hartford, and 38% in Syracuse. Texting while driving declined 68% in Hartford and 42% in Syracuse. Based on the success of these programs, an innovative approach was developed to tackle distracted driving in Ontario.

Innovative Approach

Working with Corporate Communications and OPP Command Staff, the following strategy was developed to reduce the number of fatal collisions as a result of distracted driving:

- Communication strategy that targeted all front line officers;
- Distracted driving video that focused on young drivers; and
- Operational Plan - ***"Phone in one hand, ticket in the other."***



Communication Strategy (Awareness & Education):

1. A communication strategy was developed that targeted all front line officers. The message from Command Staff, sent via email and the OPP Intranet, emphasized the importance of distracted driving and how each officer could become a part of the solution.
2. The OPP Provincial Police Academy developed an “Operational Field Briefing” for front line officers on hand held devices and display screens.
3. The OPP also focused on the Provincial Traffic Safety Plan (PTSP), which was implemented in 2007. The PTSP had identified the “Big 3” in terms of fatal collision causation as: aggressive driving, lack of occupant restraint use and impaired driving. Distracted driving was added as a causation factor in fatal collisions, thereby creating the “Big 4”. This was further embedded in day-to-day operations through the OPP’s annual business planning process.
4. Highway Safety Division partnered with The Canadian Automobile Association, Arrive Alive and Parachute to raise awareness and education of the dangers of distracted driving.
5. Highway Safety Division implemented the use of unmarked police vehicles specifically for distracted driving enforcement. The Ford Police Interceptor Utility vehicle was specifically selected to permit police officers to see into vehicles from an elevated level. These distracted driving vehicles were strategically deployed throughout the division to maximize their use.

Distracted Driving Video – “Don’t tempt fate...that text can wait”:

The OPP developed the following two initiatives:

1. A power point package was developed that could be used as a teaching resource for all Community Services Officers across the province.
2. A driver awareness video was developed at a cost of approximately \$30,000.00. Funds were raised from community partners such as Motorola, State Farm Insurance and through a provincial grant.

The objective of the video was to:

- Produce a five minute public awareness video that highlighted young driver perceptions and attitudes about the issues of distracted driving, texting or using a cell phone while driving.

- Evoke an emotional reaction in young drivers that left them feeling that they could be responsible for their death or the death of someone else because of one poor decision.

The video highlighted a family from Pembroke, Ontario that had lost their son, Damon Souliere, as a result of a distracted driving fatal collision. The parents were very vocal about raising awareness regarding distracted driving. Their interview was a highly emotional and personal tribute to the memory of their son Damon.

The video was premiered at the 2012 CACP Traffic Sub-Committee Symposium in Vancouver, British Columbia. It has since been viewed thousands of times on Youtube, opp.ca, and countless other sites that have participated in the distribution of the video.

The video was presented to the Souliere family at their son's former high school, where he was captain of the rugby team. The video was viewed by nearly one thousand students. Additionally, 400 T-shirts were distributed with the phrase "Don't tempt fate, that text can wait! Distracted driving kills."

Operations Plan (Enforcement):

Starting in 2011, Highway Safety Division initiated an annual aggressive distracted driving campaign with a "zero tolerance" approach to enforcement. The campaign included two one-week campaigns of high visibility enforcement combined with a robust media campaign, in partnership with The Canadian Automobile Association, Arrive Alive and Parachute. Each stage of the campaign was preceded by one week of saturated media, coordinated by the Highway Safety Division Community Services Coordinator.

Community Safety Impact:

In 2014, the OPP laid in excess of 20,000 distracted driving charges under the Highway Traffic Act, which is a 250 % increase over the number of charges laid when the legislation was initially introduced in 2010. For past three years, 2014 – 2012, the average numbers of distracted driving charges laid was 18,375.

The OPP continues to include two annual distracted driving campaigns each year as part of their strategy to reduce fatalities on provincial highways.

Effectiveness in Combining Various Activities

2015 is shaping up to be the seventh consecutive year in which inattentive driving surpasses impaired driving in fatal collisions. Without the heightened awareness, education and enforcement, there is little doubt that there would a greater number of senseless fatalities on Greater Toronto Area provincial highways.

The Distracted Driving campaign successfully combined awareness, education and enforcement regarding the dangers of driving distracted to the attention of the motoring public, and specifically to the attention of young drivers, who are most at risk for distracted driving.