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Safety Sidekick Newsletter

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The Safety Center is thrilled with the outcomes from the National Working Summit on Transportation in Rural America held earlier this month in Denver, CO. Thank you to our sponsors (AASHTO and CAIT at Rutgers), speakers, facilitators, steering committee members, and all of the attendees. To read more about the summit please see our article below. If you were not able to attend, please join us for our November webinar for a recap! To find out more and register, please click here.

The Safety Center is now on LinkedIn, follow us now to get updates on Center news and events. Lastly, please follow the Safety Center on Facebook and Twitter @ruralroadsafety for the latest updates and to follow us out on the road!

Sincerely,

Steve Albert
Director
National Center for Rural Road Safety
info@ruralsafetycenter.org

Safety Center Update

National Working Summit Tackles an "Epidemic on Wheels"

The National Center for Rural Road Safety (Safety Center), led by the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University Bozeman, hosted the National Working Summit on Transportation in Rural America last week, drawing 120 enthusiastic participants from around the country who worked together for three days on identifying issues and strategies to reduce injuries and fatalities on rural roads and highways.

There are more than 4 million miles of roads in the U.S., and more than 70% of them are in rural areas. Efforts to improve rural road safety not only protect rural residents, they protect every individual, family, and truck driver that uses rural roads and highways to move across

the country. With only 19% of people living in rural areas, 54% of fatal crashes occur on rural roads, killing more than 18,000 people a year. Dr. David Sleet from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called the problem "an epidemic on wheels."

Held in Denver, Colorado from September 7 - 9, the Summit encouraged collaboration among a broad range of agencies with an interest in enhancing safety on rural roads: departments of transportation, first responders, law enforcement, commerce/freight organizations, economic development/tourism agencies, public health agencies, local/county governments, and tribal agencies.

2016 National Working Summit on Transportation in Rural America Attendees

Using an innovative discussion format, participants first worked in peer groups to identify key issues and gaps for a particular interest area (such as "commerce and freight" or "emergency response"). Later, they participated in integrated multi-disciplinary group discussions to formulate concepts and priorities from a multi-discipline perspective on broader topics such as livability and Towards Zero Deaths initiatives. "Our working theme was '3 days, 10 discussion topics, 1 white paper'", said Steve Albert, Safety Center Director; "we wanted to benefit from the expertise of everyone who attended and define a clear roadmap of how best to make rural roads safer in the future."

Participants were also inspired to action by the summit keynote speakers, who included Mark Glaser, author of *58 Feet - The Second that Changed Our Lives*. Glaser has worked to raise awareness of traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries following a serious motorcycle accident in 2010 on a rural mountain road in Colorado. The closing keynote speaker was Commissioner Jill Ryan, of Eagle County (Colorado) who has used her public health background to develop motor vehicle crash prevention programs in Colorado.

Actions proposed during the summit included:

- Encourage state and local departments of transportation/public works to incorporate "Toward zero death" goals and initiatives into their strategic plans
- Encourage public health organization involvement in the development of roadway safety plans
- Document and disseminate successful safety solutions from other countries
- Provide summit speakers to present on and share comprehensive agency safety plans with state and local agencies.

Presentations from the summit are now available at https://ruralsafetycenter.org/news-events/moving-rural-america-summit/ . The complete findings and recommendations from the summit will be compiled into a white paper later this fall, which will guide future action. The white paper will be presented in a Safety Center webinar on Thursday, November 10th at 1 pm Eastern. Register here: http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07ed7kghph21e9dec1&llr=ngyyawuab . In addition, many participants recommended holding a second summit in the future. "Thanks to everyone's hard work we have a lot of great ideas and solid recommendations to build on," said Hillary Isebrands, FHWA Safety Engineer and FHWA Program Manager for the Safety Center; "most importantly, we rallied an enthusiastic group of experts who are committed to continuing this work to make rural roads safer."

Safety Center Team Members in Attendance at the 2016 Summit

The National Working Summit on Transportation in Rural America was hosted by the National Center for Rural Road Safety, and sponsored by the Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation at Rutgers University and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Many organizations provided meeting facilitation and organization assistance via a steering committee, including:

- *National Center for Rural Road Safety ,*
- *FHWA,*
- *National Association of County Engineers (NACE),*
- *National Association of Development Organizations (NADO),*
- *National Association of Counties (NACo),*
- *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA),*
- *Transportation Safety Advancement Group (TSAG),*
- *ITS America, and*
- *Meetings Northwest.*

The National Center for Rural Road Safety is supported by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration under Cooperative Agreement No. DTFH6114H00021. It is managed by a team of transportation experts at the following entities: the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University; the Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation at Rutgers University; the Institute for Transportation at Iowa State University; Cambridge Systematics; IDT Group; and Bubar and Hall Consulting, LLC; in cooperation with the Local Technical Assistance Programs (LTAPs) of Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, and New Jersey.

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Safety Center Blog

Will Technology Bring an End to Wildlife Collisions?

Collisions with wildlife can be deadly. Your likelihood of encountering animals on the road are not unique to rural areas, and in fact are common in most suburban environments. The astounding number of deer-vehicle collisions is a prime example of the tremendous impact wildlife collisions have on driver safety. So, what happens when a driverless car encounters wildlife? Read more to learn about how driverless cars are detecting and reacting to wildlife on the road in the September Safety Center blog post.

Fall Driving

While some parts of the United States are in the midst of a late summer heat wave, other areas are beginning to experience the start of autumn weather changes. As daylight begins to shorten, we have to remember to be cognizant of the driving challenges fall brings with its abundance of colorful leaves and crisp air.

The South Dakota Safety Council recently published a list of fall driving tips that point out some of the considerations drivers should take into account when heading out onto the road. Read more about these tips in the August Safety Center blog post.

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Upcoming Safety Center Trainings and Events

Upcoming Safety Center Webinars

October Webinar:
The October webinar will focus on unpaved roads. This webinar will be held during the third week in October (17th-21st). More information will be announce later this week, please check the Safety Center trainings page for registration to open soon.

November Webinar:
Defining the Future for Safe Rural Transportation in America
November 10, 2016
1:00 pm to 2:30 pm ET

This webinar will provide an overview of the white paper(s) created as a result of the Safety Center's National Working Summit on Transportation in Rural America which was help Sept. 2016 in Denver, CO.

For more information or to register for this webinar, click here.

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EMS

New Mobile Application Being Piloted for EMTs

Why is it critical to have instantaneous, accurate patient information at your fingertips when responding out to a medical emergency you may ask? According to Life Source Health Incorporated, emergency medical personnel respond to 40 million calls to 911 each year. Medical misinformation is the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States. Each day, there are 10,000 documented medical errors that can lead to adverse allergic reactions, improper doses, respiratory failure and other complications. That being said, it is critical that EMS personnel ascertain as quickly and accurately as possible, particularly when the hospital may not be around the corner or difficult to reach such as in rural areas and city environments, information that can assist in the proper diagnosis and treatment of a patient.

To that end, mobile applications are being currently developed to help provide first responders with the critical information they need, when they need it. These apps are focusing on providing access to databases which include a patient's current medications, allergies, recent admissions, pertinent past health history, recent vital signs, advanced directives and next of kin can all be accessed by this application. In rural areas where response times are typically slower, the easier access to accurate information can make the difference between life and death.

When responding to a call, there are many obstacles that prevent first responders from obtaining accurate information in a timely matter. Often times, patients are physically unable to recall this information accurately, or may be incapacitated to the point that they cannot communicate it with the first responder. There are thousands of documented medical errors that occur each day which could lead to improper dosages, adverse allergic

reactions, and other serious complications. On-the-job experience with technology and emergency situations suggest that a central data base that houses patient information and available on the go will rectify this issue and make it easier to save lives, improve patient care, and reduce liability.

While physical gathering and centralization of medical health records for patients remains one of the larger obstacles towards these apps operating smoothly, there are already test runs going on around the country, most notably by Life Source Health in New York State. However, given the importance of this issue it is only a matter of time before these innovations become industry standards.

For more information on emerging digital technologies in EMS, please visit this comprehensive report, which summarizes the overall impact that digital data, medical devices and software applications could have on EMS and their influence on how EMS and 911 systems might operate in the year 2020 and beyond, published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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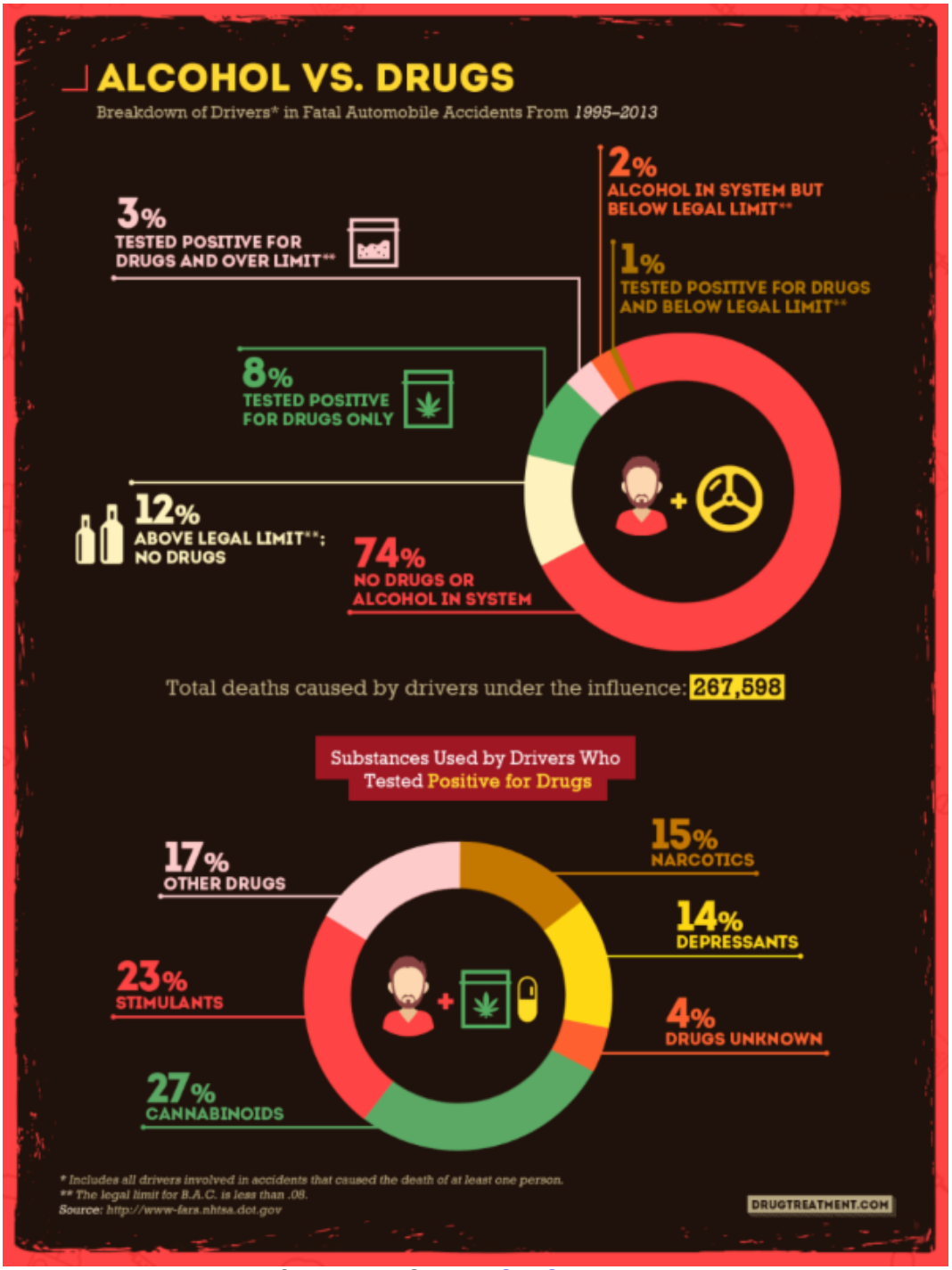
Enforcement

Is There a Link Between Legalized Marijuana and Fatal Crashes?

It appears there is an uptick in fatal crashes when the driver has been using marijuana. With Washington as a test bed, recent research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety indicates that the percentage of drivers involved in fatal crashes who were under the influence of marijuana has doubled between 2013 and 2014. One in six drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2014 had recently used marijuana.

Washington legalized marijuana use in 2012.

Another study released by the Governor's Highway Safety Association (GHSA 2015) cited that the number of drivers killed in crashes that tested positive for drugs has increased from 29 percent in 2005 to 39.9 percent in 2013. While the steep increase in prescription drugs must also be considered, the same GHSA report shows that marijuana has been the most common drug used by fatally injured drivers.



Infographic Credit: OMQ Law Firm

Driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal in all 50 states; however, just about half of the states allow legalized marijuana use in some form or another. Like drinking, drug use often leads to abuse as users become more complacent- they begin to underestimate how drugs impair their judgment of time and distance, slow reaction time, and decrease coordination. The same GHSA report reflected on two focus groups conducted in states that have legalized marijuana, Colorado and Washington. In these focus groups, respondents who deemed themselves regular marijuana users felt that their use of the drug did not impair their ability to drive. This misconception is alarming. The amount of marijuana in the system needed to impair drivers is inconsistent among users. This makes establishing THC (tetrahydrocannabinols) levels for laws, similar to BAC levels, very difficult. Alcohol is proven to increase crash risk in proportion to the BAC level. Marijuana does not work in the same manner, and it is currently impossible to determine if a driver is impaired simply based on the amount of the drug in their system.

How prolific is the threat? A US Department of Health and Human Services 2014 survey yields some pretty sobering results: 10 million people aged 12 years or older reported driving under the influence of drugs in the year prior to the survey. After alcohol, marijuana is the second most common drug linked to drugged driving.

According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics for the period 2005-2013, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana were three states that had the highest averages of drug-related traffic fatalities. These are rural states, where law enforcement patrol areas tend to be expansive. What happens though when there is not a fatal crash and a driver is stopped by law enforcement for suspected drugged driving? Rural law enforcement has a much more difficult time establishing whether a driver is under the influence of marijuana versus alcohol because proving drug intoxication requires calling in a drug recognition expert to determine what drugs are in a driver's system. Often times, drugs have not only begun to wear off by the time a driver is apprehended, but may even be undetectable by the time a trained drug recognition expert can be on the scene. Rural areas typically mean long distances between a traffic stop or traffic crash scene and an expert who can adequately point to drugged driving. Law enforcement is reliant on a 12-step process that has been standardized for drug recognition experts to use to establish cases against drugged drivers. Drug effects could be completely worn off by the time a suspected drugged driver is able to be examined. Short lived effects of marijuana, combined with long distances, make charging drivers under the influence of marijuana very challenging. A good roadside test for drug levels in the body does not currently exist.

Drugged driving is a very real problem, and it is on the rise. This may be exasperated by the legalization of marijuana in some states. The problem may be even more prevalent than is reported, since there is a particular problem in being able to prove drugged driving, especially in rural environments where there are time critical factors. Let's be reminded: In Washington in 2014, where commercialized marijuana sales became legal, fatal accidents caused by stoned drivers rose 98%. These accidents rose 32% in Colorado, also during the first year of commercial marijuana sales. It is more important than ever to make sure the public has adequate access to information about the dangers of drugged driving and do not make the decision to get behind the wheel, and that a more exacting procedure be available for law enforcement to be able to build a case for driving under the influence charges when appropriate.

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Road User

White House and DOT Issue Call to Action to Data Scientists & Public Health Experts as 2,348 More People Died in Traffic Crashes Compared to Previous Year

WASHINGTON - The nation lost 35,092 people in traffic crashes in 2015, ending a 5-decade trend of declining fatalities with a 7.2% increase in deaths from 2014. The final data released today by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration showed traffic deaths rising across nearly every segment of the population. The last single-year increase of this magnitude was in 1966, when fatalities rose 8.1% from the previous year. "Despite decades of safety improvements, far too many people are killed on our nation's roads every year," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "Solving this problem will take teamwork, so we're issuing a call to action and asking researchers, safety experts, data scientists, and the public to analyze the fatality data and help find ways to prevent these tragedies."

Ten years ago, the number of traffic deaths was nearly 25% higher, with 42,708 fatalities reported nationwide in 2005. Since then, safety programs have helped lower the number of deaths by increasing seat belt use and reducing impaired driving. Vehicle improvements, including air bags and electronic stability control, have also contributed to reducing traffic fatalities.

In response to the increase, DOT, NHTSA, and the White House are issuing an unprecedented call to action to involve a wide range of stakeholders in helping determine the causes of the increase. NHTSA will share its Fatality Analysis Reporting System with safety partners, state and local officials, technologists, data scientists, and policy experts.

And private sector partners using new data collection technologies will be offering access to unprecedented amounts of data and new visualizations tools.

According to NHTSA, job growth and low fuel prices were two factors that led to increased driving, including increased leisure driving and driving by young people. More driving can contribute to higher fatality rates. In 2015, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased 3.5% over 2014, the largest increase in nearly 25 years.

Pedestrian and pedalcyclist fatalities increased to a level not seen in 20 years. Motorcyclist deaths increased over 8%. NHTSA also noted human factors continued to contribute to the majority of crashes. Almost half of passenger vehicle occupants killed were not wearing seat belts. Research shows almost one in three fatalities involved drunk drivers or speeding. One in 10 fatalities involved distraction. Click here for a ***2015 Lives Saved Research Note*** . Click here for a ***2015 Overview*** .

"The data tell us that people die when they drive drunk, distracted, or drowsy, or if they are speeding or unbuckled," said NHTSA Administrator, Dr. Mark Rosekind. "While there have been enormous improvements in many of these areas, we need to find new solutions to end traffic fatalities."

In addition to the call to action on understanding the increase in deaths, USDOT will hold a special session at its Safer People, Safer Streets Summit on September 16th to discuss the pedestrian and bicycle fatality increase with city leaders taking part in the Mayor's Challenge .

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Safety Culture

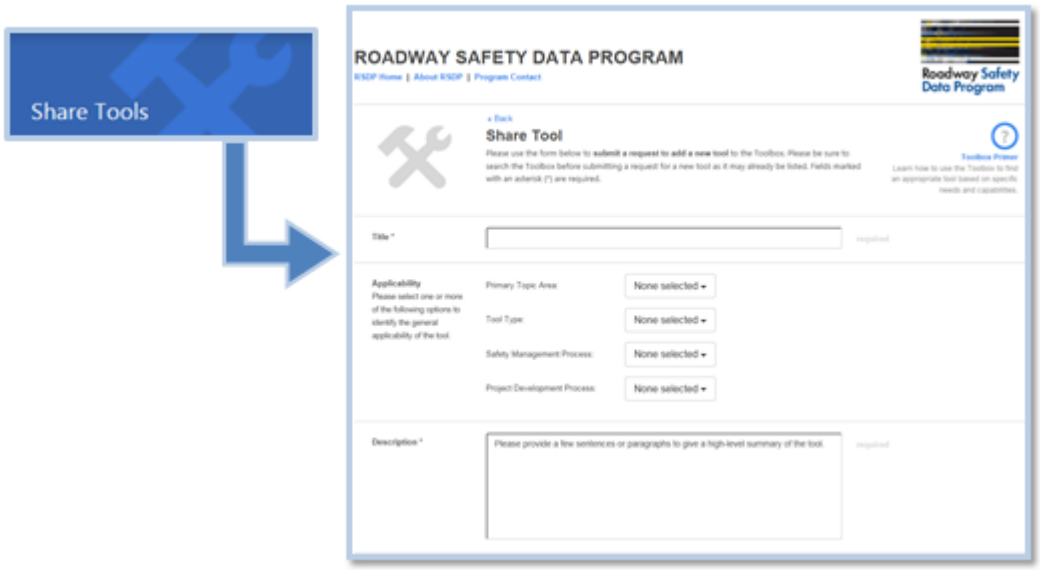
The Roadway Safety Data Program Toolbox - What's New?

By: Yanira Rivera and Stuart Thompson, FHWA Office of Safety (Reprinted with permission from FHWA's Safety Compass Newslette, Volume 10, Issue 3)

Whether you are a safety data guru, a junior analyst, or somewhere in between, the Roadway Safety Data Program (RSDP) Toolbox is for you! The Toolbox is a "one-stop shop" for your roadway safety data needs. The tools available come in the form of software, guides, or databases. The Toolbox, available here , offers flexible features for transportation safety professionals with varying technical backgrounds. The easy-to-use search interface allows the user to apply the most effective method depending on their understanding of their role, responsibility, needs, and knowledge of related tools.

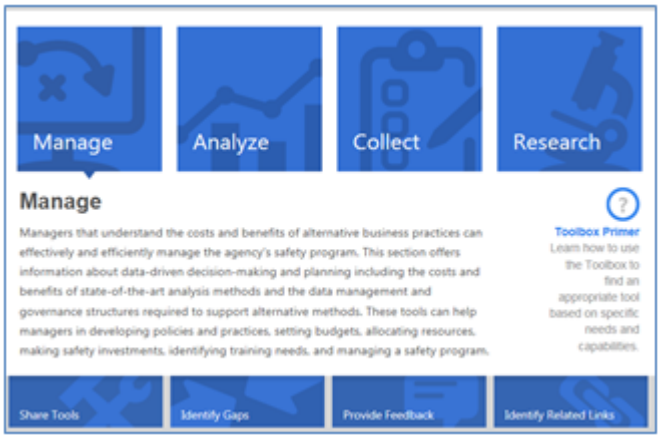
The first searching method involves the four primary topic area buttons: Manage, Analyze, Collect, or Research, where users can identify the appropriate task area either using the descriptions provided for each or use the list of roles and responsibilities that correspond to each task area.

Users can also search with the Advanced Search function. With this search technique, the user can enter the tool name or a key word to obtain a list of tools. Filters can then be applied to further refine the list of tools.



The RSDP Toolbox "Share Tools" Online Form

The tools are presented by title in alphabetical order along with the tool type and owner/sponsor. To learn more about a specific tool, users can simply click on the tool's name to access a detailed summary.



RSDP Toolbox

Since its inception in 2014, more than 140 tools have been added, and an additional 36 are scheduled to be added in the coming days. Here is a preview of two new tools in the Toolbox:

Data Integration Primer
This information guide is designed to help users to:

- Combine or link multiple data sets from a variety of sources.
- Apply multiple data sets to solve problems and inform decision-making.
- Improve transportation asset management and safety practices by translating data into meaningful and usable forms and formats.
- Ensure and improve data quality.
- Reduce data collection and management costs.

The Calibrator
This Excel-based software and associated application guide can help users to:

- Assess the performance of the Highway Safety Manual (HSM) Predictive Method as a whole on local data.
- Determine the compatibility of safety performance functions (SPFs) and crash modification factors (CMFs) from other sources on local data.
- Calibrate existing SPFs to local data using the HSM calibration procedure.

- Compare the performance of multiple SPFs.
- Identify the most appropriate SPFs and CMFs to apply from a list of alternatives.

Do You Have a Safety Data Tool that You Want To Share?
Both public and proprietary tools are welcome. To have your tool considered, click on the Share Tools link, fill out the short form with basic information about the tool, and click Submit Information. Once submitted, the RSDP Toolbox project team will receive an email and each tool will be reviewed for its inclusion. For additional information or questions about the tool, please contact Stuart Thompson .

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Vehicle

Autonomous Vehicles: Adapting 21st Century Technology to 20th Century Infrastructure

While driverless cars may have once seemed like an invention befitting only a science fiction novel, the reality is that the future is here and autonomous vehicles are already on our roadways. While the actual deployment of large scale fleets of autonomous vehicles (AV) is still on the horizon, many companies have already begun development, and are now testing on roadways. In the midst of the excitement and concern surrounding AVs, there are still questions and obstacles that the vehicles face at a number of levels, including regulatory, safety, design, and economic. The good news is that private companies and government entities are already working together to tackle the issues and ease the integration of this technology that is on the fast track to deployment.

Various studies and real world research efforts have pointed to autonomous and connected vehicles as having numerous travel benefits in addition to mitigating human error in driving. The California DMV defines an autonomous vehicle as "any vehicle equipped with technology that has the capability of operating or driving the vehicle without the active physical control or monitoring of a natural person". AVs thus will not only allow passengers to sit back and enjoy the ride, but may have the potential to reduce traffic congestion, improve highway safety and make even the far suburbs more convenient places to live. The dedication to improving the safety of our roads cannot be understated, however, given that according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), " driver error is the cause of 94 percent of crashes". Autonomous Vehicles, especially working in conjunction with large scale fleets of connected vehicles have the potential of widely reducing traffic crashes.

On top of making commuting a more relaxing experience, AVs will likely help traffic flow more smoothly and efficiently, and ultimately cut down on travel times for commuters. According to the Texas Transportation Institute, "the typical driver spends about 42 hours a year stuck in traffic". AVs will likely take out other human functions in a car, leaving the vehicle with more consistent speeds and better communication with infrastructure and other vehicles, which can reduce congestion issues. As a result, less human drivers on the road may also reduce the need for engineered safety strategies intended to assist human drivers on the road, such as rumble strips or speed bumps. In addition to changing the way we commute and travel, AVs have the potential to change how and where we live. As the USDOT notes, autonomous vehicles "have the potential to transform personal mobility and open doors to people and communities - people with disabilities, aging populations, communities where car ownership is prohibitively expensive, or those who prefer not to drive or own a car - that today have limited or impractical options".

According to global consultant McKinsey & Company, "consumers will begin to adopt AVs starting in 2020, and AVs will become the primary mode of transportation by 2050". However, the future of AVs is still largely dependent on solving issues of safety, technology, cost, social acceptance, federal regulations, and other drivers. All of these are challenges that must be overcome before AVs are the new normal on the roads. As private companies continue research and development, some experts say that developing fail-safe software for driverless cars includes rethinking how software is even designed. Most of the software we use in our everyday devices - phones, laptops, and "smart"-accessories - are not intended to operate for long periods of time without crashing or freezing. In a driverless vehicle, such a software error would have larger consequences and even deadly results. The safety of autonomous vehicles remains a major issue and question for many; as the

New York Times pointed out, "Google's self-driving car has already run into another perplexing safety problem: human drivers." Although AV sensors are constantly being improved and refined for a smoother transition with human drivers, one of the biggest challenges facing automated cars is blending them into a world in which humans don't always follow the rules. While test cars like Google's fleet of autonomous cars have been programmed to follow the law exactly, human drivers who run a stop or even do not come to a full stop, can paralyze the AV sensors and cause a delay in the vehicles path; or worse, can cause a crash.

As developers continue to fine tune their product and technology, State governments have already started preparing for arrival of AVs. States such as California, Florida, Michigan and Nevada have recently passed legislation governing the use of driverless cars, and other states are considering or working on implementing similar legislation. In June 2016, Pennsylvania created the Autonomous Vehicles Testing Policy Task Force in order to "collaboratively develop guidance that PennDOT will use when drafting autonomous vehicle policy". PennDOT is chairing the task force, which is comprised of state, federal and private-industry officials such as the Federal Highway Administration, AAA, Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and Uber Technologies.

From a regulatory standpoint, the most notable development in the world of autonomous vehicles is the US Department of Transportation release of the " Federal Automated Vehicles Policy" in September 2016. This policy was created in order to meet the "remarkable speed with which increasingly complex AVs are evolving" and "to take new approaches that ensure these technologies are safely introduced, provide safety benefits today, and achieve their full safety potential in the future". Overall, the policy is an agency guidance rather than a set of rules, which is meant as "a regulatory framework and best practices to guide manufacturers and other entities in the safe design, development, testing, and deployment of AVs".

The guidelines are broken up into four major areas of: Vehicle Performance Guidance for Automated Vehicles, Model State Policy, NHTSA's Current Regulatory Tools, and New Tools and Authorities. The Vehicle Performance Guidance for Automated Vehicles (or "Guidance") section outlines best practices for the safe pre-deployment design, development and testing of AVs prior to commercial sale or operation on public roads. The Model State Policy section confirms that states retain their traditional responsibilities for vehicle licensing and registration, traffic laws and enforcement, and motor vehicle insurance and liability regimes. The shared objective is to ensure the establishment of a consistent national framework rather than a patchwork of incompatible laws. The NHTSA Regulatory Tools section confirms that NHTSA will continue to exercise its available regulatory authority over AVs using its existing regulatory tools: interpretations, exemptions, notice-and-comment rulemaking, and defects and enforcement authority. NHTSA has the authority to identify safety defects, allowing the Agency to recall vehicles or equipment that pose an unreasonable risk to safety even when there is no applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS). The New Tools and Authorities section identifies potential new tools, authorities and regulatory structures that could aid the safe and appropriately expeditious deployment of new technologies by enabling the Agency to be more nimble and flexible.

Overall, the collaboration between a number of involved parties, including state and federal policy makers, safety advocates, city planners, auto makers and insurers, software developers, and others needs to continue as both the product and the regulations that guide it are produced and refined. As the overhaul of our nation's transportation infrastructure continues to be realized, the importance of safety, regulations, and honest vehicle testing is greater than ever.

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What's Hot Off the Press?

NHTSA Highlights Seat Belts and Car Seats During Child Passenger Safety Week

The National Highway and Transportation Safety Agency is highlighting the importance of buckling kids up during Child Passenger Safety Week with tips, videos, and recall

information to keep your family safe. The recently released 2015 National Survey of the Use of Booster Seats showed that 37.4 percent of children ages 4-7 were not being properly restrained, and 13.6 percent of children from 1 to 3 years old were being prematurely transitioned to booster seats. Find out answers to your child safety questions with NHTSA's video press release.

Harvest Time Brings Push for Increased Awareness on Rural Roadways Safety

The Bureau of Motor Vehicles in Indiana has put together this nifty checklist of safety tips for vehicles traversing rural roads during harvest season. As part of their "Be Alert, Slow Down, Share the Road" campaign, this checklist will ensure that you are ready for potential road hazards unique to harvest season, before you have to face them.

"Textalyzer" May Become New Tool in Detecting Distracted Driver Accidents

In the latest effort to clamp down on the rising number of distracted driving accidents, legislators in New York State are considering equipping police with a "Textalyzer" device which can determine whether or not a phone was texting during an accident. The device could supposedly avoid privacy concerns since it would not have the ability to view or grab any content off people's phones. Instead, it would simply show whether or not a phone was used for texting during the time of the accident, and could help law enforcement determine the causes of accidents, while simultaneously keep those responsible accountable for their actions.

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