



Center for Transportation
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RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE

Improving Traffic Safety Culture in Iowa

SPONSORS

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Improving Traffic Safety Culture in Iowa

tech transfer summary

In line with the Iowa Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan, this study revisited traffic safety culture in Iowa through the eyes of a diverse range of experts having multiple points of view.

Objectives

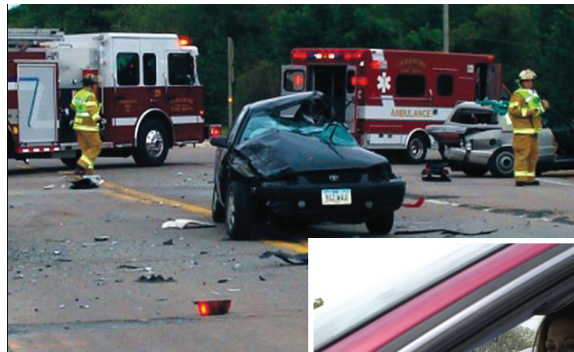
- Review and summarize the “best practices” and effective laws in improving safety culture in the United States and abroad
- Assess the traffic safety culture initiatives in Iowa compared to those of other states
- Solicit the opinions of experts on traffic safety culture in Iowa by conducting expert interviews
- Make recommendations to the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) toward improving traffic safety culture in Iowa

Problem Statement

Vehicle crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States. In 2006, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety “made a long-term commitment to address the safety culture of the United States, as it relates to traffic safety, by launching a sustained research and educational outreach initiative.”

An initiative to produce a culture of safety in Iowa includes the Iowa Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP). The Iowa CHSP “engages diverse safety stakeholders and charts the course for the state, bringing to bear sound science and the power of shared community values to change the culture and achieve a standard of safer travel for our citizens.”

Despite the state’s ongoing efforts toward highway safety, an average of 445 deaths and thousands of injuries occur on Iowa’s public roads each year. As such, a need exists to revisit the concept of safety culture from a diverse, multi-disciplinary perspective.



Research Description and Methods

In addition to reviewing and summarizing “best practices” and effective laws in improving safety culture in the United States and abroad, this study solicited the opinions of experts in public health, education, law enforcement, public policy, social psychology, safety advocacy, and traffic safety engineering in a bid to assess the traffic safety culture initiatives in Iowa.

After compiling and aggregating the safety culture issues identified through the focus group meeting and the interviews, a list of 11 high-level goals was created. With considerable input from the experts, these goals were discussed in greater detail and potential actions to meet the objectives were identified for each goal. These potential actions summarize what the experts believe needs to be done to address the higher-level goals.

Summary of Key Findings

As a result of this study, 11 high-level goals emerged, each with potential actions to support success, as shown in Table 1.

Implementation Readiness

Recommendations for improving traffic safety culture are offered in line with the top five Iowa CHSP safety policy strategies, which are young drivers, occupant protection, motorcycle safety, traffic safety enforcement, and traffic safety improvement program, as well as the eight safety program strategies outlined in the Iowa CHSP.



Acronyms in Table 1

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| BAC | Blood alcohol content |
| CDL | Commercial driver’s license |
| D.A.R.E. | Drug Abuse Resistance Education |
| DCI | Department of Criminal Investigation |
| EMS | Emergency medical services |
| GDL | Graduated drivers licensing |

Table 1. Summary of goal-oriented potential actions

| Goal | Potential actions |
|--|--|
| 1. Improve EMS Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandate EMS within Iowa (“you shall have EMS in each county”) Increase percentage of compensated EMS providers Increase public information on needs of/for EMS (types of providers, etc.) Possibly mandate EMS into alcohol education as part of D.A.R.E. |
| 2. Toughen Law Enforcement and Prosecution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow video testimony from DCI Laboratory Increase funding for DCI testing Change traffic violations to administrative instead of criminal violations |
| 3. Increase Safety Belt Use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase fines Increase penalty “seriousness” (moving violation, impact license, etc.) Increase enforcement of commercial vehicle operations Increase funding for enforcement and use of data |
| 4. Reduce Speeding-Related Crashes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase funding for more officers/enforcement Increase fines and prosecution of fines Pursue automated enforcement |
| 5. Reduce Alcohol-Related Crashes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve enforcement through increased use of data Increase funding for enforcement Toughen consequences Continue media campaigns |
| 6. Improve Commercial Vehicle Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue graduated CDL Increase enforcement funding and training |
| 7. Improve Motorcycle Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase rider training Increase education campaign on impaired motorcycle driving Pursue lower BAC for motorcyclists Increase education to encourage helmet/gear usage |
| 8. Improve Young Driver Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a consistent curriculum across the state with multiple disciplines Increase hours required for both classroom and driving Investigate increased insurance industry involvement |
| 9. Improve Older Driver Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandate continuing education for older drivers (maybe insurance incentives) Institute driving test for persons starting at 70 years of age Increase use of wider and brighter markings and signs Investigate/encourage physicians report when drivers are losing competence |
| 10. Strengthen Teenage Licensing Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue stronger GDL through legislative efforts Change teen attitudes toward driving through education Increase parental involvement in education and early driving |
| 11. Reduce Distracted Driving | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen distracted driving laws Address cockpit engineering Increase education and marketing |