

Good Afternoon. It's an honor to be here today and I'm grateful for the opportunity to address all of you at this Strategic Highway Safety Plan workshop.

I am glad for this opportunity to talk to you. It is impressive to see such a vast array of stakeholders represented here today. You each sit next to experts in the fields of Transportation, Public Health, EMS, and Public Safety. Representatives from city, county, state, and federal agencies have come to the table to work "Toward Zero Deaths." I am inspired to see this multi-level, multi-disciplinary approach to traffic safety and I am filled with hope for what we can accomplish working together.

Throughout this workshop, you have been developing strategies to create a culture and an infrastructure that will free our roadways from motor vehicle deaths. "Towards Zero Deaths" is an aggressive goal, but it is a goal worth fighting for.

There are few endeavors more important than those aimed at saving lives.

In my career, I have been fortunate to work for some outstanding organizations; the United States Secret Service, Interpol, and the California Highway Patrol just to name a few. Each of those organizations possesses public servants who are goal orientated and share a desire to make a difference. In the short time that I've been the Commissioner of Public Safety I see that same drive and determination here in Iowa and with the stakeholders within this room.

But as you all know, a desire to make a difference is not enough.

To have success, we must all share the same vision for how best to reach zero deaths. To begin this journey we need to strategically establish statewide goals and objectives that will set in place a road map for implementation. Specific action plans must be backed by data, best practices, and research. I see this workshop as a good first step to build upon and I commend you for the work you have done here today. You have covered a lot of ground -- from reviewing data to exploring how to shift our safety culture.

Our agencies and this workshop have identified several areas as needing critical attention in order to reduce fatalities. Some of these are:

- Lane Departures and roadside collisions
- Speed, impaired drivers, and unprotected occupants
- Older drivers, young drivers, and distracted drivers

Changing the culture of traffic safety is another important area to focus on. We are all aware that safety is enhanced through technology, safer vehicles, and improved road systems. Our biggest hurdle to overcome, however, is still the driver!

Creating a culture of safety is a complex challenge that is both a professional and personal responsibility. Every motorist can help prevent traffic fatalities and serious injuries by how he

or she drives. We need to engender a prevailing public attitude that holds traffic fatalities and serious injuries as unacceptable. The individual should understand his or her personal responsibility to prevent crashes.

This month, I had the privilege of attending Governor Branstad's "Condition of the State" speech. One of his key points was Iowa's Healthiest State Initiative. With 361 fatalities last year in Iowa, traffic fatalities must be recognized as a public health crisis. Traffic fatalities continue to be the leading cause of death for Iowa teens.

As you think about that list of issues I just covered, remember that we can all have an impact.

No matter what agency you represent, you have knowledge and insight that is valuable. Bring your ideas and your expertise to the table, and be prepared to take your efforts one step further: Don't just voice your own opinion. Solicit the opinions and insights of your partners in this endeavor. Remember that incorporating different perspectives is key when setting and executing a strategy "Toward Zero Deaths."

I think that we all recognize that "Towards Zero Deaths" is not going to happen overnight. We have our work cut out for us. But have confidence in the knowledge that success is inevitable! Iowa's long history and commitment to safety bolsters our efforts.

In 1970 there were 912 fatalities on Iowa roadways. Approximately half of those were alcohol related. We had no occupant or child restraint law on the books and ideas such as the "designated driver" hadn't become common place. Cable barriers were sparse and air bags were years away.

Last year 361 fatalities were reported. Iowa ranked second in the nation for fewest alcohol related fatalities and we are near the top in the nation in seat belt compliance at 93%. Those strides toward motor vehicle safety are impressive. The past shows us that when we work together we can implement change and we can reduce traffic fatalities. We have had success before. We will have success again.

As you move forward the options are endless.

We are only restrained by the limits of our own imaginations. Our strategies should focus on:

- Improving Inter & Intra Agency Cooperation
- New legislation
- New Quick crash clearance protocols
- New crash scene procedures that forward collision photos to ER doctors
- Continuing to improve road design
- Stronger emphasis on education and public awareness and,

- Better utilization of crash data

This list could go on and on. But remember that no project or tactic will achieve success unless we all work together. As we move forward, I challenge each of you to build upon the strong multidisciplinary approach set in place here today.

Become re-energized and aggressively implement the visionary strategy “Towards Zero Deaths”.

I appreciate you being here today and I look forward to working with you in the future.