

ToolKit: Sample Op-Ed Article

Every 14 Minutes, Another Family Loses A Loved One. Imagine a Day with Zero Traffic Fatalities...

By (NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION)

October 10, 2019 is the eighteenth year of Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day. The 2019 Theme is "Don't Drive Distracted - Drive to Arrive." In 2017, there was a total of 37,133 people killed in the U.S. in fatal crashes. Of this total of fatal crashes 3,157 involved distraction (9% of all fatal crashes). Cell phone use was reported to have been a factor in 444 fatal crashes. There were an estimated number of 391,000 people injured in distraction-affected crashes of this number 30,000 were estimated to be using their cell phone.

In order to reduce fatalities the campaign asks everyone to focus on their own behavior when using America's roadways - as pedestrians, bicycle and motorcycle operators, motor vehicle operators and passengers. Each person must take an extra measure of care to ensure their safety and the safety of others by sharing roadways in a safe manner.

The Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day Program was kicked-off in 2001, patterned after the Great American Smoke out and believed necessary when statistics showed that from 1995 thru 2000 over 250,000 deaths had occurred on our highways and streets. The sad news is that the 37,133 fatalities for 2017 could be the number of approximately one-half the attendees at a large football stadium on a fall afternoon. The good news is that with many promoted safety programs, improved roadways, safer cars and slightly less number of miles driven there were 328 fewer fatalities in 2017. With this small reverse in trend, it is even more important that we continue promoting using better driving practices. The 37,113 number of traffic related deaths is unacceptable with nearly one life lost every 14 minutes.

Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day will be celebrated in various locations around the nation and here in (CITY, STATE) to continue encouraging the public to make special efforts to keep themselves and their loved ones from becoming one of those statistics. (ADD STATE AND OR LOCAL STATISTICS IF AVAILABLE.)

Beginning with October 10th and every day thereafter an even fewer number of deaths lost in vehicle related crashes can result if everyone not only imagines a day with zero fatalities but also takes personal responsibility and pro-active steps such as:

- Drive assertively, as if your life depends on it - that means courteously and defensively;
- Don't drive distracted (no cell phones and blackberries must be turned off and if needed pull off the road to a safe location).
- Give full attention to the road ahead (driving 60 mph means traveling 88 feet in one second) in order to recognize conditions and make safe driving decisions;
- Don't drive while impaired (no alcohol if driving);
- Buckle-up every trip - every time;
- Use properly-installed child safety seats for children age 8 and under;
- Don't speed, and slow down to posted speed limits in construction zones;
- Keep vehicles and tires properly maintained;
- Wear appropriate protective gear when bicycling, skating or riding a motorcycle or scooter;
- Always stop, and look left, right, left before crossing streets; and
- Work with local officials to remove hazards and improve roadway safety.

Special Insert:

IF THERE HAS BEEN A TRAFFIC CRASH RECENTLY PUBLICIZED IN YOUR AREA, BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE INCIDENT, BUT DO NOT USE THE INDIVIDUAL NAMES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED WITHOUT PERMISSION. We can prevent tragedies like this from happening in the future - but only if we all commit to making motor vehicle crashes, injuries and death prevention a top priority.

There is a role for everyone, whether as a driver, passenger, motorcyclist, pedestrian or cyclist. The good news is that by working together, we can continue to reduce traffic fatalities. By making traffic safety a priority for you and your family year-round, you just may prevent yourself or someone you love from becoming one of the 90 people who become a fatality.

In 2006 the Transportation Safety Committee of T&DI - ASCE became stewards of the program and website <http://www.asce.org/brakesonfatalities>. The National Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day Committee creates and promotes the annual program. Numerous federal agencies, states, local agencies, organizations and individuals are involved in promoting an annual event.

The Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day program's mission has been to serve as an advocate and a resource to help reduce fatalities. This includes the support of the recently established national goal of "Towards Zero Fatalities." Organizations interested in learning more should visit our website at <http://www.asce.org/brakesonfatalities>

If your organization wishes to become involved in the PBFD please send an email with the name of a contact person to (<mailto:ttanddi@asce.org>) and visit the Tool Kit page for material and ways to create an October 10th event.