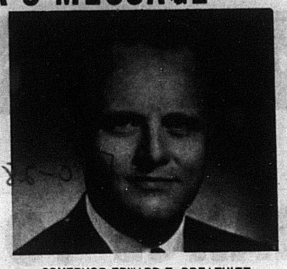
THE GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE



GOVERNOR EDWARD T. BREATHITT

More than a year ago, Kentucky launched an all-out campaign to reduce the mounting slaughter on its highways. Since speed is the principal cause of serious accidents, we began suspending the licenses of every convicted excessive speeder for a period of 90 days. There are no exceptions.

This is one of the most drastic crackdowns ever undertaken by any state. Since this drive started, I've had some interesting letters, visitors, and telephone calls.

One man wrote me: "You'll never get my vote again!" Another asked: "What kind of Governor are you? It's the job of the politician to do favors for as many people as he can. If you don't do favors, you won't be a good Governor!"

An attorney said: "You've destroyed the point system." I even got it from a couple of judges. Some of my friends are worried over what effect this clamor will have on my political future.

The answer is very simple. The only way for a governor to handle a drive such as this – or any other decision, for that matter – is not to worry about votes. Just do the right thing and the votes will take care of themselves.

I'm convinced that trying to save lives is the right thing. If the program results in saving the life of even one unknown person, then it's a success. If a number of lives are saved, it would be a God-send.

Each year thousands of Kentucky citizens give their time, their efforts, and their money to cancer drives, to heart drives, to tuberculosis drives, and to drives to fight all other killer diseases. There is no limit to the work we will do, the courage we will show, the sacrifices we will make to save just one life.

Is it too much, then, to expect people to be courteous and to obey the motor vehicle laws and help save lives? If an airplane crashes and kills 30 persons, it is banner headline news. If a child on his way home from school is slain in an insane crime, the state is sickened and aroused. If a robber shoots a neighbor in a senseless murder, there is a loud demand for instant retribution. This is the Kentucky and the American concept – a concept that every life is precious.

Yet last year 911 persons were ruthlessly slain on our state's highways. These are the deaths of fathers and mothers; college students and servicemen; the store clerk; the neighbor next door; and little boys and girls who are too young to protect themselves from the dangers of the adult world.

This is an appalling waste of life. Even more appalling has been the failure of many of our public officials and many of our citizens to do something about it. We have become used to the ghastly blood-letting on our highways. We have come to accept highway deaths as inevitable. Kentuckians, who will move heaven and earth to save the life of one person, stand idly by while innocent men, women, and children are killed in their automobiles.

Many persons think of traffic safety as the job of public officials only. Let the police do it. Let the legislature do it. Let the courts do it. Anyone but me.

It's not as simple as that. There is an individual responsibility to be assumed. Organizations have a responsibility too. There must be citizen understanding and citizen support because there is always somebody ready to throw a brickbat at a traffic safety program. There are too many selfish interests ready to tear it down. There are too many toes to be stepped on when strict law enforcement is the key to a drive.

Our county judges, our prosecutors, our police officials, cannot stand alone in this drive. They've got to have public support behind them.

A traffic safety program in Kentucky or any other state will be effective only if public opinion understands the problem and actively supports the remedial measures. It is a question of educating the public; of constantly pushing the program.

It is up to you to impress on your families, on your neighbors, on your public officials, and on your communities the need for strict enforcement. I am convinced that the vast majority of Kentuckians want traffic safety programs. They will be receptive to your message because the overwhelming number of Kentuckians have a respect for law. They are against the "fix" and the "favor." They want equal treatment for everybody under the laws of our Commonwealth.

We have made one thing crystal clear from the beginning of this campaign. Kentucky is not interested in piling up a long list of convictions and suspensions. Our goal is to slow drivers down and keep them alive. We won't consider the program a real success until traffic slows down to the point where few arrests have to be made.

In this safety campaign we have made an ironic discovery. The great mass of drivers won't heed an appeal to slow down to save their own lives or the lives of their families. But they will slow down to save their licenses.

While it is obvious that we have made a good start, let us bear in mind that it is only a start. Much more remains to be done if the number of traffic fatalities is to be reduced.

Our safety people know the course that has to be followed if the catastrophic loss of life on our highways is to be curbed. But they can't do the job without citizen support. It is up to you to marshal that support and put it into life-saving action.

This magazine supplement can be an education and help to all of us. In it, we have outlined part of our program, not in a sense of presenting a panacea for curing our highway ills, but to inform you about the problems and opportunities of highway safety, to invite your comments and suggestions. We want to profit from your knowledge and experience. We want you to profit from our work and experience.

I am determined to face up to this problem and work with the people of Kentucky to solve it. Let us hope that our work will generate sufficient wisdom and enthusiasm to make our highways a path to life and enjoyment instead of a road to death and tragedy.

KENTUCKY'S ACTION PROGRAM
GOVERNOR'S COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR TRAFFIC SAFETY

In Kentucky, we are fortunate in that our Chief Executive, Governor Edward Breathitt, is very much concerned with the problem presented by traffic accidents. Under Governor Breathitt a vigorous new program has been established through the framework of the Governor's Coordinating Committee for Traffic Safety. The committee was formed by the Governor last year.

The committee has developed the Kentucky Action Program for Highway Safety. It was devised while working in close harmony with the national Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Certain aspects of the Governor's program for traffic safety had already gotten underway prior to the development of the Action Program. They include:

1. He approved a state-wide public education program on traffic safety which was undertaken immediately by the Kentucky Department of Public Safety.
2. He revised Kentucky's Driver Point System to help save lives on Kentucky highways.
3. He called a state-wide conference of judges, prosecutors, and police chiefs to stress the need of effective enforcement of traffic laws by courts and enforcement officers.
4. A State Citizen's Safety Conference was established to help bring the message of traffic safety to as many Kentuckians as possible.

There are certain other phases of the Action Program which do not require legislation and many of these activities are already underway. They include:

1. Development of a Court Reference manual for use by traffic judges. This will assist in the administration of our courts and in the application of justice in our traffic courts.
2. Development of a uniform traffic ticket which it is hoped will be used by all traffic enforcement agencies within the state.
3. Conducting of regularly held regional traffic court conferences.
4. Providing formal education and training for drivers of state-owned vehicles.
5. Improving and implementing the school bus training program.
6. Expanding and improving the present school bus safety inspection program.
7. Expanding and improving the educational programs relating to school bus safety for both the pupils and the motoring public.
8. Elimination of all obsolete traffic control devices.
9. Retraining of all enforcement officers of the Kentucky State Police.
10. Intensifying the program of highway roadblocks by Kentucky State Police to apprehend licensing violators and other motorists in violation of Kentucky law.
11. Improving and intensifying the state's public information program on traffic safety.
12. Upgrading standards of training for ambulance drivers within the state.

It is a complex and far-reaching program. Commissioner of Public Safety, Glenn Lovern, serves as Vice-Chairman of the Governor's Coordinating Committee for Traffic Safety in the development of this ambitious project.

Other areas of executive responsibilities include the Point System, the Driver Limitation Program, and traffic safety promotion.

Studying the Kentucky Action Program left to right; Richard O. Bennett, Insurance Institute for Highway safety, Charles Barker Jones, State Safety Co-ordinator, Emerson H. Westwick, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Commissioner Glenn Lovern, Department of Public Safety.

Serving on the Governor's Coordinating Committee for Traffic Safety are: Honorable Edward T. Breathitt, Governor, Chairman; Glenn Lovern, Commissioner of Public Safety, Vice Chairman; Charles B. Jones, State Coordinator; Tom D. Isaac, Assistant State Coordinator; Tom Garrett, Senator, Paducah; Foster Pettit, Representative, Lexington; Paul Allen, Representative, Glasgow; Jim Caldwell, Representative, Louisville; Howard Hunt, Representative, Danville; Ray Corns, Governor's Office; Miss Cattie Lou Miller, Commissioner of Public Information; Dr. Russell E. Teague, Commissioner of Health; Robert Matthews, Attorney General; Dr. Harry Sparks, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Henry Ward, Commissioner of Highways; William Bivens, Commissioner of Insurance; Ben Combs, Commissioner of Motor Transportation; Judge John Palmore, Court of Appeals; Colonel James E. Bassett, Director, Division of State Police, Department of Public Safety; Dwight Bray, Chief Highway Engineer; William Galloway, Director, Division of Traffic, Department of Highways; Louis Yandell, Director, Pupil Transportation, Department of Education; and Don Sullivan, Director, Division of Driver Licensing, Department of Public Safety.

WHO MUST PAY...
ACCIDENTS COST MONEY

Each Driver Is Responsible

In spite of continuing efforts in the field of highway safety, accidents will and do happen.

When they do, and when the apparent damage is $100 or more, or when personal injuries or death result, each driver involved must comply with the Kentucky Financial Responsibility Law.

Regardless of who is at fault, each driver must complete an accident report form within 10 days and show proof that he is able to pay for all the damages or injuries within 60 days of the date of the accident.

Failure to comply with either of these requirements can result in the suspension of the operator's license and the plates and certificates of all vehicles registered in the owner's name.

After the Accident

These immediate steps should be taken if you are involved in an accident in which someone dies or is injured, or in which the apparent damage is $100 or more:

--if anyone is injured, call a doctor or ambulance;
-- call a law enforcement officer to the scene of the accident;
--procure the full names and addresses of all persons involved;
--obtain from any State Police Office, State Trooper, or Sheriff an accident report form (SP-74), which must be completed and mailed within 10 days to the Department of Public Safety, Division of Driver Licensing, Frankfort.

Next, you must show proof that you are able to pay for all the damages and injuries incurred in the accident.

You are in no way obligating yourself to pay for the damages. The parties concerned, their insurance companies, or the courts will decide who was negligent.

Drivers May Disagree

But sometimes the drivers involved disagree over the cause of the accident, and you may lose the argument. To make certain that you meet your obligations if you should be judged responsible for the accident, the Financial Responsibility Law requires you to do one of three things.

If you, as a driver or car-owner, were covered by property damage and public liability insurance at the time of the accident, complete the SR-21 (insurance information) form attached to the report form (SP-74). Send this form to the Department of Public Safety, Frankfort. Do not depend on someone else to do it for you.

If you complete this requirement, no further action will be taken by the Department--unless at a later date the courts require you to pay damages greater than you were insured for, and you do not meet that obligation.

Uninsured Driver

If you were not insured at the time of the accident, you may procure and mail to the Department of Public Safety notarized releases from the owners of the property damaged in the accident and all persons injured. (Releases signed by insurance companies are not acceptable.)

Or you may wait for a letter from the Department notifying you of the amount of damage to persons or property which was incurred in the accident.

You will receive such a letter only if you have not shown proof of responsibility in either of the ways mentioned.

You will have 15 days after the letter is sent either to comply with the law in one of the above ways, or to post a cash or corporate surety bond with the Department of Public Safety, Division of Driver Licensing, Frankfort.

The bond must be in the amount designated by the Department, for one year from the date of the accident.

An average of $20,000 in bonds is posted each month with the Department. The amount of each bond varies with the accident.

Each fatality automatically calls for $10,000 from each person involved. However, no one driver may be required to post more than $25,000 for an accident.

Failure to Comply

If you fail to comply with the law in any one of the three ways within 60 days from the date of the accident, you can lose your operator's license and the plates and certificates of all vehicles registered in the owner's name.

In some instances, the driver of the car involved is not its owner. Since driver and owner are held co-responsible, if neither one complies with the law, both will be penalized. The driver will lose his license, and the owner his plates and certificates.

In July, 1965, 494 Kentucky motorists lost their licenses for failure to comply with the law.

The driver or owner may re-apply for his license, plates and certificates at the end of one year after his suspension, if no suit has been filed against him.

He may also be reinstated by complying with the law at any time within that year.

"We're not trying to take away licenses. We're simply trying to protect the people and property involved in accidents," says Don C. Sullivan, director of the driver licensing division.

The best way to avoid complying with the Financial Responsibility Law is to avoid accidents.

FACE YOUR LIMITATIONS
DISABLED DRIVER IS DANGEROUS

It takes more than knowledge of the rules of the road to drive a car. It takes a sound mind in a sound body.

In 1961, Pennsylvania's Commissioner of Traffic Safety, O. D. Shipley, estimated that 1.6 per cent of the nation's licensed drivers were not competent -- physically or mentally -- to operate a motor vehicle.

Realizing that the person with an unstable mind or undependable body is just as dangerous on the highways as the drunken driver, Kentucky's Department of Public Safety set up a program in 1964 to strengthen this weak spot in the driver licensing program.

The Driver Limitation Program was established, not to penalize handicapped drivers, but to save their lives -- and those of others.

Improve, Not Remove

It is designed, not to remove the driver, but to improve him -- by making him aware of his problems and by helping him to alleviate them.

Only if his physical or mental disabilities cannot be compensated for through special driving techniques or car accessories is he barred from the highways. Even then, he may re-apply for a license if the disability is corrected at a later date.

Since the program was initiated in June, 1964, the Department of Public Safety has suspended the licenses of 108 drivers under its provisions. The Department has notified 771 drivers to report to a physician for examination.

Of the 771 drivers whose physical or mental capability has been questioned, 85-90 per cent came to the attention of the Department through their involvement in three traffic accidents within a two-year period.

Unconscious Driver

The Department may also require a medical examination when a driver indicates he "blacked out" prior to a collision; if at least two other citizens swear to an affidavit that he has a deficiency that would make him a potentially dangerous driver; if he had an obvious defect when he applied for his license; or if his driving behavior or record indicates that he is physically or mentally impaired.

If a driver does not submit to an examination by a physician of his choice or by the County Health Officer within 45 days after he is notified to do so, his license is immediately suspended.

(Seventy-four of the 108 drivers who have lost their licenses since the program began forfeited their right to drive at this point, recognizing their own deficiency.)

The examiner then presents his findings to a Medical Review Board, composed of three physicians, the Commissioner of Health or his representative, and the Commissioner of Public Safety or his representative.

If the Board believes that the driver's deficiency does not merit the loss of his license, he is advised to report for an interview with a trained representative of the Department of Public Safety.

How to Adjust

The Interviewer discusses with the driver ways he can compensate for his disability. For example, a driver with faulty depth perception learns how to measure distances with his mind, instead of his eyes. He discovers that he can guage the distance between his car and the car in front of him by observing telephone poles or the highway reflective markers set 400 feet apart.

Often a driver may not even be aware that he has a handicap. Once he knows his weak spot and how to compensate for it, he can become as safe a driver as the next man -- perhaps safer, because he is aware that a lapse in attention may mean the loss of his license -- or death.

However, seven of the 108 drivers lost their licenses because they failed to report for interviews.

Of the 108 drivers whose licenses have been suspended since the program began, only nine suspensions have been for physical incompetence and one for mental incompetence. Five drivers voluntarily surrendered their licenses.

Failure to Report

The rest (93) lost their privilege to drive because they failed the driver's exam (7) or because they did not report for examinations, interviews or hearings. Twenty-nine of the latter reported later and had their licenses reinstated.

Three hundred fifty-five of the 771 cases are now before the Review Board pending further examination for eye, orthopedic, neurological, psychiatric, diabetic, and cardiovascular deficiencies.

The number will grow, not because the number of physically or mentally impaired drivers is increasing, but because more are being detected. They must be detected -- not in order that the Department of Public Safety can take away as many licenses as possible, but that every driver may know his limitations and not go beyond them.