

SEE YOU THERE... SAFE AS!

National Road Safety Committee Road Safety to 2010 stakeholder and community engagement process – July/August 2006

The issues

See you there... Safe As! is a National Road Safety Committee project to run a series of pre-policy stakeholder and community engagement workshops across New Zealand during July and August 2006 to explore:

- The disproportionate risks faced by young and novice drivers.
- More effective penalties for speed management which improves outcomes and addresses the “revenue gathering” myth
- Reinvigorating the stalled downward trend in numbers and proportions of fatal and serious injury crashes where alcohol is a contributing factor.

Young and Novice Drivers

Despite recent improvements, young drivers are significantly over represented in crash statistics compared to older drivers. In 2005 young drivers (those aged 15-24) were involved in 142 fatal traffic crashes, and 795 serious injury crashes. Drivers in the 15 to 19 year old age group are seven times more likely to crash (per 100 million kilometres driven) than drivers in the 45-49 year old age group. Drivers in the 20 to 24 year old age group are three times more likely to crash than 45 to 49 year old drivers. Young drivers tend to be disproportionately represented in fatal crashes at night where, despite restrictions on driving at night, over a third of fatal crashes involving young drivers on a restricted licence occur after 10pm. The number of breaches of learner and restricted class 1 licences increased significantly per 1,000 licences between 2000 and 2006. For example the number of restricted drivers carrying authorised passengers per 1,000 licences increased from 61 in 2000 to 125 in 2004.

Speed management

Speed is acknowledged globally as being the single most important determinant of road safety. No matter what causes the crash, the driver's decision to travel at a certain speed directly affects the force of impact and the likelihood of an impact at all. Notwithstanding a steady reduction in mean speeds, in 2005 speeding was a contributing factor in 130 deaths and 579 serious injuries. Loss of control and head on crashes are the most common types of fatal crashes involving speeding. Over four fifths of the fatal crashes where drivers speed was a factor fall into these categories. Also fatal speed related crashes are significantly more likely to occur at night.

Alcohol

Alcohol is listed as a factor when a driver's blood or breath alcohol level is above the legal limit or when the attending officer suspects that alcohol consumption contributed to the crash. As attitudes have changed and enforcement increased, there has been a substantial reduction in alcohol related deaths and injuries. Progress has stalled however since 1999 with over 100 fatalities and nearly 2000 injuries occurring in alcohol related crashes each year. The 20 to 24 year old age group has the greatest number of alcohol affected drivers involved in fatal crashes.