

LA CROSSE COUNTY HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 8, 2012
 La Crosse County Administration Building Room B390
 1:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Berg, Jackie Eastwood, Matt Gallagher, Ilona Hansen, Thomas Knoop, Robert Koenen, Bill Lubinski, Roland Solberg, Reiny Yahnke

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Tim Hammes, Evan Stone

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Betsy Bloom (La Crosse Tribune)

CALL TO ORDER:

Sgt. Bill Lubinski, Committee Coordinator, called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Matt Gallagher, seconded by Thomas Knoop, to approve the November 9, 2011 Highway Safety Commission minutes as printed. Motion carried unanimously.

LA CROSSE COUNTY CRASH DATA FOR 4th QUARTER OF 2011

2011	1 st quarter	2 nd quarter	3 rd quarter	4 th quarter	Yearly Total
Sheriff Department					
Hit & run	15	9	6	5	35
Car/deer	34	63	38	97	232
Injury	30	38	42	33	143
Property damage	100	57	56	75	288
Fatalities	1	1	2	1	5
Sub-total	180	168	144	211	703
Comparison of Prior Year Totals	1 st quarter	2 nd quarter	3 rd quarter	4 th quarter	Total
2003	214	190	186	317	907
2004	199	195	162	295	851
2005	224	234	147	313	918
2006	215	192	150	251	808
2007	245	168	182	280	875
2008	228	150	158	284	820
2009	178	137	144	246	705
2010	177	128	126	260	691
2011	180	168	144	211	703

The average of 4th quarter accidents from 2003 to 2011 in La Crosse County is 273. This is below the average for the 4th quarter. Of the crashes, six involved the use of alcohol and one involved drugs. In the 4th quarter there were 114 reportable crashes with 214 occupants,

185 reported using seatbelts for an 86% compliance rate. There were five hit and run accidents that were all property damage.

One fatality crash was worked by the Sheriff's Department:

- 12/11/11 @ 8:19 A.M. in the Town of Hamilton. An 89 year old woman was driving on Interstate 90. It was a sunny and clear day but the frost was coming out of the highway. The vehicle lost control and impacted the guardrail at mile marker 8 eastbound. There were two occupants in the vehicle, both were seat belted and all airbags were deployed.

Ilona Hanen reported that she went through 727 accident reports that were on file from this last year, one by one; looking for what was the most common type of crash and/or where the most crashes occurred.

- Interstate 90 - 11 accidents reported; including 3 deer and 2 due to icy roads. It was found that 40 days of this last year had either icy or snowy road conditions, contributing to a lot of the accidents.
- State Road 16 – This area reported the highest amount of accidents; two-thirds of those happened between Losey Blvd. and State Road 157, the majority of those being rear-end accidents. Most accidents took place during the afternoon hours.
- US Highway 53 – This location was the 2nd highest area of accidents, reporting 62 crashes; including 28 deer and 1 turkey.
- State Road 33 – 66 accidents reported; including 24 deer, 1 horse, 3 motorcycles and 1 alcohol related. Of the accidents not involving animals, failure to yield or inappropriate passing was the cause of the crash.
- US Highway 14 – 34 accidents reported; including 27 deer and 2 dogs.
- State Road 35 – 24 accidents reported; including 6 deer and 2 caused by icy roads.
- State Road 162 – 30 accidents reported; including 14 deer, 1 coyote and 2 motorcycles. This area had the highest number of alcohol related crashes.
- State Road 108 – 21 accidents reported; including 9 deer, 1 raccoon and 2 motorcycles.
- County Road M – 40 accidents reported; including 18 deer, 1 cow and 1 dog.
- County Road C – 25 accidents reported; including 14 due to icy roads, 2 deer, 1 motorcycle and 1 car fire.
- County Road B – 15 accidents reported; including 3 deer, 1 wolf and 1 fatal.
- Grouping of northeast highways (FN, OT, ZN, ZB and Z) – 29 accidents reported; including 6 deer and 1 rabbit.
- Area east of Highway 53 (Q, V, VV, W, X) – 26 accidents reported; including 20 deer.
- F, FO, OA, O – 19 accidents reported; including 9 deer, 6 icy roads and 1 medical condition.

MEDIA PRESENCE AT CRASH SCENES

Bill Lubinski reported that approximately November 28th, he and Sergeant Berg sent out the media letter that the committee worked on. Approximately 1½ weeks later Bill received a phone call from Sheriff Helgeson, who stated he had received a number of phone calls from the local media outlets with concerns regarding the letter. Bill and Ilona Hansen attended a meeting with three of the local media outlets. Eleven law enforcement agencies were represented at this meeting, along with the emergency dispatch director. The media was concerned that the recommendation would curtail the reporting of the news. The media was assured that contact with law enforcement agencies would not change, and that there is actually a law in affect stating that safety procedures need to be followed. Media was made aware of the law. The letter also generated an update in the public safety communication policy as to how requests from the media will now be handled through the dispatch center.

HIGHWAY 33 PROJECT

Reiny Yahnke reported that the project is scheduled for 2014. The intersection of Highway 33 and Hagen Road will be evaluated and the preferred intersection control will be a stoplight signal. Drive In road access will be closed.

WISDOT UPDATES & HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN SOLICITATION

Thomas Knoop reported that preliminary crash data shows last year finished up with 570 fatalities in Wisconsin. This is up slightly from the year before, but still the 4th year in a row under 600. In 2010 there were 37 fatalities in December and in 2011 there were 53, with the good driving weather being a contributor to the lower number.

The average number of fatalities in La Crosse County is 8, up from the 7 it used to be. There were 17 traffic fatalities in La Crosse County, which more than doubled any of the past 5 years.

In reference to OWI related convictions, in La Crosse County 34.1% is the rate of convictions to repeat offenders, which is actually under average for the state; the state being at 36.6%. Year-end and year-out 70-80% of the fatal crashes involving alcohol were with first time offenders.

Legislative updates include:

- Act 57 (Mobile Home Transport): Allows issuance of single permit to move multiple sections of home on a single transport.
- Act 73 (Bicycle): As of March 1st of this year you will be able to pass a slow moving vehicle on a solid yellow; be it an Amish buggy, tractor or bicycle.
- Act 91 (Disabled Parking Cards): Increases penalty for fraudulent production, sale, and/or use of disabled parking cards.
- Act 111 (Child Restraint): Permits transport of a child in a more restrictive restraint than required by law.
- Act 113 (OWL/OAR/OWS): Increases penalties for these offenses.
- SB-235 (ATV Age Limits): Allows kids under the age of 12 to operate ATV's in any location except on roadways.
- SB-341 (Open Doors on Emergency Vehicles): Permits emergency personnel to leave vehicle door open when stopped and performing official duties.
- AB-405 (Fourth OWI a Felony): Makes 4th offense of OWI a felony.
- AB-411 (Impoundment for OWI): Requires a 30-day impound on 1st OWI.
- AB-433/SB-320 (Ignition Interlock): Requires IID on 1st OWI, regardless of BAC.
- AB-439 (OWI Snowmobile etc.): Requires suspension of license for repeated violations of snowmobile/boat/ATV OWI restrictions within five years.
- AB-490/SB-397 (B&W DL Photo): Permits DOT to use black and white photos on motor vehicle operator's license. Studies show that B&W photos causes officers and security personnel to concentrate on facial features versus hair/eye colors.
- AB-501/SB-410 (Transporting Manure): Allows vehicle hauling manure to exceed weight limit from September 1st to December 31st.
- AB-515 (Skateboards on Roadways): Removes skateboard from definition of "play vehicle", allowing the use of skateboards on local roadways.

Bill Lubinski handed out a copy of the statute that details the new regulations on passing in a no passing zone (Act 73 Bicycle); statute 346.09(3)(b).

Laws of the Month include:

- February 2012: Driving too fast for conditions causes many wintertime troubles.
- March 2012: Wear your safety belt or risk being stopped and ticketed. Drivers should also be aware that they may be ticketed for any unbelted passengers in their vehicles.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/DISCUSSION

Bill Lubinski reported that on November 29th, he and representatives from the Sheriff's Department had a meeting with the Highway Department. Bill was introduced to Ron Chamberlain (Highway Superintendent for County of La Crosse). Ron wanted to advise that even with the budget and personnel cuts, the Highway Department will continue to provide the same type of service as in the past winter seasons. Ron provided information concerning roadway definitions that the Highway Department is now following in regard to passable roadways and what they consider reasonable speed for vehicles while traveling on snow covered roadways. Ron also wanted to advise that they are using a new type of mineral mixture that would be used in the area of County Road B and Smith Valley Road; as well as County Road J in the area of Hylandale Road, in the Township of Bangor. The mixture would melt the snow as soon as it hits the roadway.

Jackie Eastman reported that the Dresbach Bridge project would begin at the end of this year, working on a section of the bridge. The existing bridge will remain open (one lane) and the project is set to last through 2016. The plan is to start with the bridge and then move into the interchange.

Matt Gallagher reported that the Losey overlay project will take place this summer from La Crosse Street to Market Street and should last a couple of weeks. It will be down to one lane each way, with most all of the cross streets being closed during that time.

Tim Berg reported that the left turn crossover lane into Farm and Fleet will be eliminated for eastbound traffic. This project is currently in the planning stages.

Bill Lubinski reported that he has not received any new information from Gundersen Lutheran in regard to the signage situation as of yet.

AGENDA FOR MAY 9, 2012 MEETING

Items to be included on the May 9, 2012 agenda are La Crosse County crash data, WisDOT Updates and Highway Safety Plan Solicitation, Gundersen Lutheran signage update, announcements/discussion, and set agenda for the August 8, 2012 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Thomas Knoop, seconded by Matt Gallagher, to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 P.M. Motion carried. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Approved 5/9/12, Lisa Bruring, Recorder