

Sent to Mr. L. J. Ennis, Jr.,
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It is high time that the American people were getting together to do a concerted job of preventing motor vehicle accidents.

Why?

Twenty-two states do not prohibit issuance of drivers' licenses to habitual drunkards.

Dope addicts can obtain drivers' licenses in as many more States. Only 11 States require drivers to be able to read street and highway warning signs printed in the English language.

A scant eight States test the vision of drivers and but 15 demand knowledge of traffic laws from their drivers.

These are but a few reasons. There are dozens of others.

It may appear to the public that slow progress is being made in advancing the cause of safety, but there is promise of a great acceleration now that all the most important organizations in the safety field have agreed upon the program most needed and have joined efforts to make the program effective upon a national scale. Only by action on a national scale can even reasonable progress be made in the reduction of accidents.

To carry into effect the existing knowledge concerning accident prevention, the following eight-point program is submitted. It is not intended to include all steps that will be necessary but it does provide a sound foundation for traffic control and regulation in the interests of traffic safety. The elements of this program are inter-dependent, and to an extent overlapping. Several are important parts of others but are given individuality for the purpose of emphasis. The action program recommended follows:

1. Uniform State motor vehicle laws.
2. Skilled investigation of traffic accidents.
3. Establishment of a uniform system of accident reporting.
4. Establishment of adequate highway patrols, including official inspection of vehicles.
5. Establishment of complete and final authority over the issuance and revocation of drivers' licenses.
6. A highway improvement program divided into two general classes of projects (a) those of the emergency type and (b) those for the long-time plan.
7. A plan of State and Federal safety organization adequate to secure on a wide scale the adoption and enforcement of this proposed program.
8. A national safety education program.

To make this program effective there must be coordinate action by Federal agencies, State authorities and national organizations concerned with safety. Federal participation could be effected through the establishment of an inter-departmental committee with representation from all Federal organizations which now have authority over, and responsibility for, elements of the safety problem under the Federal laws. There should also be an advisory committee composed of representatives of the important national associations engaged in the traffic safety field in its broad aspects. This plan together with the plan of organization of the State safety authority would form a complete national structure for the formulation of an adequate nation-wide program and its effective operation.

A responsible attitude of good citizenship and intelligent selfishness already has placed the road builders and road building industry of the nation behind this and every other effort to advance the cause of safety.

For too long have many agencies and individuals held hope that a single panacea exists that will stop accidents. This hope, utterly absurd, has resulted in all sorts of cure-all offerings, many from so-called experts or near experts.

Perhaps the most important single principle developed during the year just closed is that there is no single cause of

accidents. Each accident is the result of causes in combinations. The possible number of combinations of positive elements by mathematical calculation produces a potentiality of accidents of a magnitude beyond conception.

Perhaps the failure of the law-makers to recognize this characteristic of multiple contributing elements has acted as a powerful deterrent to more effective programs of accident control. Certainly it has given rise to serious delays.

On the other hand, recognition by the courts of actual conditions in many instances has made them reluctant to impose reasonable penalties upon offenders of traffic laws. Recognition of contributing factors may mitigate to the point of allowing the offender to escape without price the most serious infractions of the law.

Sufficient recognition has not yet been given to the fact that this big problem of street and highway safety throws upon established routine and traditions of the courts a new social problem with which they are not designed to cope.

The processes of the courts are not singled out for criticism in themselves, but to illustrate the failure of society as a whole to recognize the tremendous dimensions of the problem and provide adequate methods to deal with them effectively.

So let it be well remembered that while several States have adopted standard traffic laws, etc., there still remains a serious

non-uniformity in the major principles which affect highway safety. It is not suggested that laws and other regulations be identical in every detail, but they must be in those matters which even remotely affect the safety of motor vehicle operation.

American Automobile Association
Automotive Safety Foundation
Harvard Bureau for Street Traffic Research
We must realize that driving habits of individuals tend to become fixed, and particularly in times of stress or emergency the reactions are involuntary. And in this country of inter-city and National Congress of Parents and Teachers interstate travel, it is preferable that these habits become fixed under regulations that are similar, no matter what part of the country the driver finds himself in.

A widespread program of public education and of specialized training of traffic officers and engineers is under way by national organizations through funds provided by the *Automotive Safety Foundation*. This list of organizations is a notable one, and has been mentioned in connection with the formulation and recommendation of a safety program for each State.*

Every indication points to progress during the coming year in the safety movement far beyond that made in any previous year, but the concept of adequate governmental organization and comprehensive laws must be the objective continuously recognized as fundamental in the establishment of a permanent safety program.