Introduction

To support the monthly activities of the 2008 Alberta Traffic Safety Calendar, a Communications Resource Toolkit has been developed by the Traffic Safety Communications Committee. This toolkit is intended to help you develop communications vehicles in your community to support the September advertising campaign targeting Back to School Safety.

The media is our primary source for information on what is happening in communities throughout Alberta. When it comes to traffic safety, the media can play a critical role in providing information to Albertans. With this in mind, we’re providing you with relevant, up to date information from which to develop your own communications initiatives.

To help you customize news releases and media notices to support the September advertising campaign, we’re providing you with key messages, a fact sheet, frequently asked questions as well as guidelines.

Your Communications Resource Toolkit on Back to School Safety includes:

I. Key Messages 3
II. Fact Sheet 3
III. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) 4
IV. Advertising 5
V. Tips for Writing a Media Notice 5
VI. Media Notice Sample 7
VII. Tips for Writing a News Release 8
VIII. News Release Sample 12
IX. List of Stakeholders and Partners 15
X. The Alberta Traffic Safety Context 16
I. **Key Messages**

The following key messages can be used to support the Back to School Safety Advertising Campaign:

*For children and parents:*

1. Follow the bus safety rules - make sure you always ride the bus safely.
2. Point, Pause, Proceed. Be alert at intersections and always look out for danger when crossing the street.
3. No helmet! No bike! Always wear your helmet when riding your bike.
4. Always wear your safety gear when blading, skating, or riding your scooter.

*For drivers:*

1. Always watch for children crossing roads. Be prepared to stop or slow down.
2. Alternating flashing yellow or amber lights means a bus is slowing down to stop. Do the same.
3. Stop when the school bus activates its alternately flashing red lights.
4. Know and obey the speed limits in school and playground zones.

The following fact sheet and frequently asked questions (FAQ) can assist you in building news releases and media notices. The information below can also help you to answer any possible questions that arise from the media.

II. **Fact Sheet**

Drivers play a large role in back to school safety. Be alert and cautious. Watch out for children and school buses.

Young students need to be aware of traffic safety rules as pedestrians, bicyclists, skateboarders and as school bus passengers.

**Facts to Know**

- From 2002-2006, on average each year, approximately 350 children under 14 are killed or injured as pedestrians or cyclists.

- Twice a day, everyday, during the school year, more than 5,000 Alberta school buses safely transport about 265,000 children to and from school. School buses in Alberta travel more than 400,000 kilometres a day – that’s about 10 times around the earth.

- Three quarters of casualty collisions and 90 per cent of property damage collisions involving a school bus occurred in urban areas. The large majority of injuries sustained by school bus occupants were reported as minor; not requiring hospital admittance.

- Nearly half of the other drivers involved in collisions with school buses committed a driver error. The top five errors committed by other drivers were: following too closely, committing a stop sign violation, making an improper lane change, making an improper turn and backing unsafely.
III. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

When are school and playground zones in effect and what is the speed limit?
When travelling in school and playground zones, drivers must pay attention to the posted signs.

School zones have a speed limit of 30 km/h in both urban and rural areas. These limits are in effect on school days from 8 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., unless otherwise posted.

The speed for both urban and rural playground zones is 30 km/h unless otherwise posted. These limits are in effect every day from 8:30 a.m. to one hour after sunset. You are not permitted to pass or attempt to pass another vehicle travelling in the same direction within a playground zone during the hours when it is in effect.

What should I do when approaching a school bus?
Motorists need to respect the flashing lights on a school bus, which create a safe area for children around the vehicle and are often the children's only defense when they get on or off the bus.

What do flashing amber lights mean?
Watch out for alternating flashing amber lights. They mean a school bus is slowing to stop where students will either be getting on or off the bus.

What do alternately flashing red lights mean?
Red means stop! The penalty for passing a school bus with its alternately flashing red lights activated is $402 and six demerit points.

- Slow down and stop when the school bus activates its alternately flashing red lights. This means you must stop whether you are approaching an oncoming bus or following one. The only exception to this rule is when the bus is on the opposite side of a highway divided by a median.
- Proceed only when the red lights on the bus have stopped flashing.
- Watch for school buses loading and unloading children, even if the lights aren't flashing.

Some municipalities have passed bylaws not requiring school buses to activate their alternating flashing red lights when they stop. In this case, motorists do not need to stop but should still be cautious and watch for pedestrians when the buses are loading or unloading students.

How can children cross the road safely?
Practice the "Point, Pause and Proceed" crossing system: look in all directions before crossing the street; scan for danger left, right, ahead and behind; then point across the road with your hand and arm and proceed when you can safely do so.

What can I teach my children about getting to the school bus stop safely?
Walk on the sidewalk; if there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side of the street facing traffic, staying as far away from the vehicles as possible.

- Be at the bus stop at least five minutes before the school bus arrives. Never run after the school bus to try to catch up.
- Wait for the bus at a safe place at least 10 giant steps away from the road. Have younger children practice the steps to become familiar with this rule and pick a designated spot.
- Remember that if you can't see the driver, the driver can't see you either.
What about seat belts on school buses?
Many parents wonder why school buses don't have seat belts. This is a valid concern, but in fact, studies have found that lap belts in school buses may cause severe head and neck injuries in children during a collision. This is currently under review by Transport Canada and provincial and territorial vehicle safety representatives.

Where can I find more information about back to school safety in Alberta?
Additional information and resources can be found on the Saferoads web site at: http://www.saferoads.com/vehicles/sbcv.html

IV. Advertising

The Back to School ad campaign, starting on September 8 to October 4, will focus school bus safety with one radio spot http://www.saferoads.com/audio/TSI_No7SchoolBus.mp3; billboards in rural areas throughout the province: http://www.saferoads.com/pdf/Billboard-Final.pdf as well a poster is available to all stakeholders: http://www.saferoads.com/pdf/Billboard-Final.pdf.

V. Tips for Writing a Media Notice

What is a Media Notice?
A media notice is a one-page release to advise reporters of an announcement or event that they may want to cover.

Some Tips About Media Notices:

- A notice should have a headline that contains news, a verb, and not in uppercase.
- The lead should grab readers’ attention and convey in a single sentence the most important aspect of the story.
- It should say what the news conference is about, the date, location, who is attending and whether or not there will be photo opportunities.
- Always include a contact name, phone number and e-mail address of someone the media can contact. Make sure the contact person is available to take calls.
- Send out the media notice at least two days in advance of the news conference or event.
MEDIA NOTICE (Should be in bold font and placed near the top left hand corner of the page.)

Event: [Headline] (Provide a main headline that focuses on the most newsworthy item of the event.)

The lead should grab readers’ attention and convey in a single sentence the most important aspect of the event.

After the first paragraph provide the answers to what, when, where and who will be attending. Any persons of local interest, dignitaries, elected officials or others who are key to the event should be mentioned.

Date: (Provide information regarding the date of the event.)

Time: (Provide information regarding the time of the event.)

Location: (Include the address, room number, etc. and provide parking information for media. Also, include a map if available.)

Program: (Include information regarding the length of the event and specific details regarding the agenda (e.g., if there will be a luncheon, presentation, etc.).)

Visuals: (Provide details regarding any exhibits, live entertainment or potential photo opportunities at the event.)

Contact: (Provide a contact name and phone number for someone who is available to speak to media prior to the event. This person, however, is not necessarily the key spokesperson.)

– 30 –

(The symbol -30-, which should be centered at the end of the media advisory, indicates it is finished.)
Students, Lieutenant Governor and police officers ‘walk the talk’ on traffic safety

Edmonton… Media are invited to join Alberta’s Lieutenant Governor, representatives of the Calgary and Edmonton Police Services and the RCMP, along with other traffic safety partners to mark the 10th Annual Walk the Talk Day.

Officials will teach two classes of Grade 2 students some important traffic safety tips.

Date: Wednesday, September 26

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Location: Legislature South Grounds, Edmonton

Participants: His Honour, Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Norman Kwong and Her Honour, Mrs. Mary Kwong
Calgary and Edmonton Police Services and the RCMP
Students from St. Leo Catholic Elementary School in Edmonton and Colchester Elementary School

Walk the Talk Day is a highlight of the Alberta government’s traffic child safety program. The program is aimed at ensuring children learn the skills they need to stay safe while traveling to and from school and within their neighbourhoods.

Media enquiries may be directed to:
Eileen McDonald, Communications
Alberta Transportation
(780) 422-0842
Cell: (780) 913-4609
eileen.mcdonald@gov.ab.ca

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.
VII. Tips for Writing a News Release

News Releases are News Stories

News releases should be written like news stories. Doing this allows those reading it to see at a glance what the substance of the story is, without having to read the fine print. It also allows media to run the news release as a story with minimal or no changes. The bottom line is, the more your news release is structured like a news story, the better chance it has of being used the way you want it to be used.

Good news stories and good news releases follow these guiding principles:

1. The headline captures the highlight of the story. Also, the headline must contain a verb.
2. The first sentence, or lead, also focuses on the most important part of the story and must contain the NEWS.
3. Quotes must convey information or an opinion. Wishy-washy statements don’t make great quotes.

Headline

Write a headline that contains some news. The headline is the first thing people look at, so it is the first chance you have to relay some information. Headlines should not be in uppercase (except of course for things like proper names and places).

Sub-headings:

- Sub-heads are very useful when used effectively in a news release. They can be used when there are a couple of significant messages to relay.

Writing a Good Lead

The lead is the most important part of a news release. It should grab readers’ attention and convey in a single sentence the most important aspect of the story. When writing the lead, try to imagine that the lead is the ONLY part of the news release the reader will see.

A lead should not start with an individual’s name unless that person is the news, which isn’t very often. It should also not focus on details like who made the announcement, or the deep background behind the story.

CP Style

News releases should follow Canadian Press (CP) style – this way, newspapers don’t need to waste time editing for style. Here are some style tips that news release writers should remember:

1. On first reference, a person should be referred to by first and last name, and company, agency or government department name. Titles such as Mr., Mrs., Dr., and Honourable are not used. Secondary references should be by last name alone. First reference: John Brown, President of Browns Construction, said… Second and subsequent references: Brown (not Mr. Brown or President Brown).

2. Use of capital letters is reserved for proper names, trade names, government departments, names of associations or companies, languages, religions, nations, races, places and addresses. Otherwise, lowercase is used where a reasonable choice exists. On first reference: The Health Services Utilization Commission; the Government of Alberta. On second and subsequent references: the commission; the government.

3. Avoid jargon and acronyms.
Other Tips

- Remember to KISS (keep it short and simple). Most news releases can and should be no longer than a page. Detailed information that’s not central to the story should go in a backgrounder.

- Round off numbers to the nearest whole number if possible, and use no more than one decimal place: $8 million, not $8.013 million.

- Avoid using “we,” “us,” or “our” in news releases – it’s often unclear who these words are referring to, the company, agency, or government? All Albertans?
  - Don’t use: our specialists say…
  - Use: agricultural specialists say…
  - Don’t use: we plan to…
  - Use: the town council plans to… or… economic development plans to…

- Avoid using time references like “today,” “yesterday,” and “tomorrow”. Media will need to revise these references for use in their stories, because anything announced “today” will need to be changed in stories that appear tomorrow and beyond. It’s best just to use a date.

- If possible, list at least one media contact who is available to answer media inquiries on the day the release is issued. Return media calls promptly, no more than two hours after you receive the call.

- Look at how newspapers write headlines and leads, and incorporate their best practices into your work.

- Carefully proofread all news releases, and especially check numbers for accuracy (e.g. dollar figures, phone numbers). It is often prudent to have someone rather than the author do the proofreading to check for grammar and spelling.

- Wherever possible, simplify the language used in releases. Remember, the purpose of releases is to inform the public, not the experts.

General Format Guidelines

Please do not use the phrase “for immediate release” as it states the obvious.

- **Font**: Times New Roman 12 pt; headline in bold, 16/18 pt; sub-headings (if used) in bold, 14/16 pt, italics.

- **Date**: at top, before headline, flush left, italics.

- **Location being released**: in the first line of the body of the release; italics; followed by … (please type three periods rather than inserting the ellipsis symbol as a special character.

- **- 30 -** signifies end of text and should follow the body of the release; 12 pt, centered.

- **Media inquiries may be directed to**: bold, 12/14 pt.

- **Contact names**: 12 pt; flush left; two or three columns as required. (Make sure the contact people are available on the date the release is going out).
The template below shows a general layout and the components of a news release and it is designed to serve only as a guideline.

**NEWS RELEASE** (should be in bold lettering and placed near the top of the body of the email)

[Header] Location, Date (Use the date of release to the media), Caption

[Headline]

Your headline should capture the essence of your news to give media a ‘handle’ for what information will be in the news release. For example: *The Alberta Government is announcing a new highway safety outreach program, dedicated to educating all drivers about sharing the roads safely with commercial vehicles,* etc. Ideally, the headline should not exceed 80 characters. It should begin with the identification of the involvement of your organization followed by the caption.

[Lead Paragraph]

Your lead sentence is critical. You need to succinctly summarize the key elements of your news by linking the who, what, when and where of your story with the timeliness of the information you’re sharing. A story lead is intended to catch the attention of the reporter by telling the reporter why your story is important and newsworthy. Your lead should be one to three sentences maximum.

[Second Paragraph]

This portion of the news release is where you elaborate on the ‘news’ in the lead paragraph. Consider using a quote from a relevant source to make your news release more intriguing or credible. The person quoted should be a leader or an expert on the topic. Quotes should be authentic and sound conversational. They should also say something about how the speaker views or feels about the subject.

[Third Paragraph]

Your third paragraph should expand on the story in order of importance for the reporter. You can also provide data and include statistics to add more credibility to your story.

[Final Paragraph]

The final paragraph of a traditional news release could either contain the least newsworthy material or could restate and summarize the key points of your news release.

-30-

(The symbol -30-, centered at the end of your news release, indicates the end of the release.)

**For more information, please contact:**
First Name, Last Name, Title *(put the name and title of your spokesperson here)*

Phone: (area code) ### - #### *(put your spokesperson’s office phone number and a cell phone number – here)*

E-mail: email@email.com *(put your spokesperson’s email address here)*
Joint Forces Checkstop Pilot program shows the province’s commitment to making Alberta’s roads safer

Edmonton... A new pilot in the Edmonton area will see three enforcement agencies working together to reduce drunk driving.

Called the Joint Forces Pilot Impaired Checkstop program, the pilot will be the first time the Edmonton Police Service, RCMP and Alberta’s Sheriffs will combine forces to increase the number of checkstops in Edmonton and surrounding areas. This program complements existing Checkstop programs and increases enforcement of existing traffic laws dealing with impaired driving and related offences.

The pilot project, ending on March 31, 2008, will collect information for analysis such as the number of vehicles checked; impaired charges; 24 hour suspensions; driving with no insurance or registration and other criminal and provincial offences.

“Our traffic safety partners will use their strengths and resources to help reduce the number of incidents involving drinking and driving on our roads,” said Luke Ouellette, Minister of Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation. “Drinking and driving affects too many lives – it’s simply not acceptable.”

“Reducing the number of injuries and fatalities due to drinking and driving is a priority for the Government of Alberta, and increased joint enforcement is an important tool to make this happen,” said Fred Lindsay, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. “Partnerships in law enforcement, like we see in this pilot project, are an effective way to keep our roads safe for all Albertans.”

“The RCMP is proud to be teaming up with the Edmonton Police Services and Alberta Sheriffs to conduct enhanced enforcement to get impaired drivers off our road. Impaired drivers pose a serious risk to their safety and to the safety of others, said Inspector James Stiles, Officer in Charge, RCMP "K" Division Traffic Services. “The police are committed to reducing the harm caused by impaired drivers. Our message is simple: If you plan to drink, plan for safe transportation, and never get behind the wheel after consuming alcohol or drugs.”

“This pilot project is an opportunity to partner with other police agencies in the Edmonton area to show the importance of ridding our roads of impaired drivers,” said S/Sgt. Bill Horne of the Edmonton Police Service, Traffic Section. “We also want to inform the public that the issue of impaired driving isn’t exclusive to Christmas, but instead is a year round concern.”

In Alberta, being legally impaired means a blood alcohol reading at or above .08. Individuals can also be charged if they refuse to provide a breath or blood sample. That said, impairment can occur at much lower levels, which means a person could be impaired even after only one or two drinks. Collisions causing injury or deaths, arrests, suspensions, criminal records, higher vehicle insurance costs and possible jail terms are the consequences of this crime.

Albertans who suspect a motorist is driving while impaired can report the incident to the local police service by calling 911. Have the following information ready: location and direction of travel of the suspected impaired driver; time of observation; licence plate number; make, model, colour and any additional information about the vehicle and driver. Improving traffic safety is part of Premier Ed Stelmach’s plan to secure Alberta’s future by building safe communities, greening our growth and creating opportunity.

Media inquiries may be directed to:
Eileen McDonald, Communications
Alberta Transportation
780-422-0842 780 913-4609 cell phone
eileen.mcdonald@gov.ab.ca

Tim Chander, Communications
Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security
780-427-6167
tim.chander@gov.ab.ca

Lisa Lammi, Senior Communications Specialist
Edmonton Police Services
780-421-2638
lisa.lammi@police.edmonton.ab.ca

James Stiles, Inspector, Officer in Charge
"K" Division Traffic Services
780-412-5598

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.
Joint Forces Checkstop Pilot program shows the province’s commitment to make our roads safer

In 2006, over 22 per cent of driver’s in fatal collisions had consumed alcohol prior to the crash compared to four per cent of drivers in injury collisions. The majority of drinking drivers were male from the age of 18 to 24 years.

On average, approximately 7,700 people are convicted of impaired driving in Alberta each year. The Alberta Administrative Licence Suspension (AALS) ensures that drivers charged with an alcohol-related offence will face an automatic suspension of their driving privileges – no conviction is necessary. AALS includes:

- Immediate 24-hour licence suspension;
- Automatic three-month licence suspension or disqualification for providing a breath or blood sample greater than .08 or refusing to provide a breath or blood sample;
- Automatic six month licence suspension or disqualification if the offense results in bodily harm or death;
- A 21-day temporary permit to allow the driver to set his or her affairs in order.

Media enquiries may be directed to:
Eileen McDonald, Communications
Alberta Transportation
(780) 422-0842 (780) 913-4609 cell phone
eileen.mcdonald@gov.ab.ca

Tim Chander, Communications
Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security
(780) 427 6167
tim.chander@gov.ab.ca

Lisa Lammi, Senior Communications Specialist
Edmonton Police Services
(780) 421-2638 lisa.lammi@police.edmonton.ab.ca

James Stiles, Inspector
Officer in Charge
“K” Division Traffic Services
(780) 412-5598

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

- 30 -
IX. List of Stakeholders and Partners

Alberta government:
- Alberta Aboriginal Relations
- Alberta Agriculture, and Rural Development
- Alberta Education
- Alberta Finance and Enterprise
- Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission
- Service Alberta
- Alberta Health and Wellness
- Alberta Employment and Immigration
- Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security
- Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations
- Alberta Justice and Attorney General

Federal
- Health Canada
- Transport Canada

Police Services
- Calgary Police Services
- Edmonton Police Service
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Municipalities
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
- City of Calgary
- City of Camrose
- City of Edmonton
- City of Red Deer
- Strathcona County

Universities
- University of Alberta
- University of Calgary

Safety-related organizations
- Aboriginal Traffic Safety Coalition
- Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research
- Alberta Motor Association
- Alberta Motor Transport Association
- Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council
- Alberta Roadbuilders and Heavy Construction Association
- Insurance Bureau of Canada
- Motor Dealers Association of Alberta
- Mothers Against Drunk Drivers
- ENFORM
- Centre for Transportation Engineers (C-TEP)
X. The Alberta Traffic Safety Context

Released in November 2006, the Alberta Traffic Safety Plan (TSP) is in response to the McDermid Report, “Saving Lives on Alberta’s Roads: Report and Recommendations for a Traffic Collision Fatality and Injury Reduction Strategy.” This is a comprehensive strategy designed to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries in the province.

The Traffic Safety Plan outlines key initiatives to help prevent motor vehicle collisions, build safer roads, enforce traffic laws and better educate Albertans about traffic safety. The TSP also supports Canada’s National Road Safety Plan, Road Safety Vision 2010, to make Canada’s Roads the Safest in the World.

The Traffic Safety Plan also includes an Action Plan that identifies the activities to be undertaken over the next one to three years. The Action Plan also supports some of the government’s strategic objectives, specifically to improve Albertans’ quality of life and provide safe communities.