

Help Save Lives, Report Drunk Drivers: Maryland's Citizen Drunk Driver Reporting Program

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ABSTRACT

The tragic but real consequences of drinking and driving continue as one of the most current examples of irresponsible social behavior in the United States. In addressing this highway safety problem, many states have enacted new laws, developed general deterrent programs, and earmarked special funding projects to fight this national social problem--the drinking driver. The efforts in Maryland to reduce alcohol-related deaths and injuries have been successful, in part, because of a citizen reporting program implemented in July 1982. A discussion of this program's success is provided in this paper.

On July 1, 1982, the Maryland State Police implemented a "Citizens Report Drunk Driver Program." This program was designed to solicit the support, participation, and cooperation of all citizens, state and local government agencies, private businesses, citizen groups, and citizen band (CB) radio organizations within Maryland to report all suspected drunk drivers to law enforcement agencies. The results of this program have proved to be gratifying. During the first year citizens reported in excess of 9,100 suspected drunk drivers to law enforcement agencies; more than 3,300 suspected drunk drivers have been contacted by police and more than 1,250 of those contacted were arrested.

HISTORY

With the development of the automobile, a need for better communications became essential. As advanced radio technology was perfected, the need for communication improvement, coupled with the desire to install radio equipment in vehicles, became a reality. Because of these desires, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created the Citizen Band Radio Service (Class D) in 1958. The original intent of the CB radio was to provide a private, two-way, short-range communication system for use by the general public.

After the 89th Congress passed the Highway Safety Act in 1966, the House Committee on Public Works, while addressing the House of Representatives, stated, "When accidents occur, it is essential that every resource be mobilized to save lives, lessen the severity of injuries, protect property, and restore the movement of traffic."

In 1970 the FCC set aside channel 9 on the CB radio solely for emergency communications. In 1975 the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) approved a report on the use of the CB radio for transportation safety when it recognized the absence of a national uniform system to assist motorists in the event of disaster, serious accidents, and so forth. NHTSA, following the approved report, developed the

National Emergency Aid Radio (NEAR) Program. This program encouraged each state to develop a statewide NEAR Program. Funding for the NEAR Program was to be provided to the states through the use of state 402 funds.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Maryland decided to participate in the NEAR Program in 1978, and a comprehensive plan was developed. The goals set for the program were to provide the motorist public within Maryland with an emergency assistance communications system for obtaining emergency services and traveler assistance easily and rapidly. This is a volunteer program, and its success depended greatly on the support of local government, individual monitors, and volunteer groups. It was believed that the potential of this program toward the enhancement of highway safety in Maryland was outstanding.

The NEAR Program was organized so that the first level of coordination would be within all 23 county boundaries of the state. A Maryland State Police officer was selected to coordinate NEAR activities within each county.

The State Police coordinator's primary responsibility was to foster cooperation among all CB monitoring groups and individuals within their county. Furthermore, the coordinator provided assistance as necessary in support of the statewide programs, goals, and objectives.

Currently, the Maryland State Police have 24-hr CB monitoring capabilities from 1,200 CB-equipped patrol vehicles and 28 installations. During the first year of implementation more than 4,000 calls were received through the CB radio that required police action. Calls received dealt with criminal as well as traffic-related incidents.

In late 1981 the Field Operations Bureau of the State Police decided to use the agency's CB capability to facilitate its driving while intoxicated (DWI) countermeasures effort. The idea was to combine elements of the NEAR Program and the basic concept of the Report Every Drunk Driver Immediately (REDDI) Programs currently operating in several states. According to Michelle McMurtry of the National Transportation Safety Board, "some 17 states now have programs of this type, and most can be implemented relatively inexpensively."

GOALS

In concert with the agency's commitment to increasing DWI arrests, a program was designed that would solicit the support of every citizen in reporting drunk drivers to state and local law enforcement agencies. A working committee was formed. The committee consisted of one NEAR coordinator from each of the seven State Police Troops, one member from the Public Information Office of the State Police, one member from Planning and Research, one representative from the Alcohol Speed Enforcement Unit of the State Police, and a member from the

Field Operations Bureau, Traffic Program Planning Unit, who acted as chairman.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the committee was to develop a comprehensive statewide program to solicit the support, participation, and cooperation of all citizens within Maryland to report all suspected drunk drivers to law enforcement agencies. This was to include state and local government agencies, private businesses, citizen groups, and CB radio organizations. Such a program would act as a general deterrent to those who may have the proclivity to violate the Maryland drunk driving statutes. It was anticipated that through the efforts of all citizens in reporting drunk drivers, this program would increase the drunk driver's risk and his perceived risk of being detected and arrested. The result would be a reduction in the number of drinking drivers and alcohol-related crashes on Maryland roadways. Moreover, a social climate would pervade Maryland that would identify drunk driving as socially unacceptable behavior.

In an effort to gain maximum participation from all citizens in support of the program, public information and education (PI&E) materials were developed and disseminated to local law enforcement agencies and citizen groups through the local State Police NEAR coordinator. All marked State Police patrol vehicles displayed "Help Save Lives Report Drunk Drivers" and "For Help Call CB Channel 9" bumper stickers. Letters were forwarded to all law enforcement agencies in Maryland requesting their support and assistance in monitoring the effectiveness of the program. Local police participation in the program would be to assist the State Police in the dissemination of PI&E materials and to encourage everyone taking a citizen report of a drunk driver to keep a record so that the results of the program could be measured. The information necessary to monitor the program was

1. The number of citizen-reported drunk drivers,
2. The number of drunk driver contacts as a result of the citizen reports, and
3. The number of drunk drivers arrested as a result of the contact.

Each agency was asked to forward weekly totals of citizens reports to the State Police Field Operations Bureau, Traffic Program Planning Unit, so that a statewide total could be compiled.

IMPLEMENTATION

On June 29, 1982, Governor Harry Hughes announced the program during an afternoon news conference held at the State Police Headquarters in Pikesville, Maryland. This news conference was attended by police chiefs from across the state, who offered their support for the program.

The program amassed some 903 citizen reports, 279 contacts, and 119 arrests during the first month of implementation. As of August 23, 1982, just 7 weeks into the program, 1,442 citizen reports had been received, which resulted in 439 contacts and 195 drunk driver arrests.

As of January 10, 1983, just 6 months into the program, 5,301 calls from citizens resulted in contact being made with 1,879 suspected drunk drivers; of those contacts, 717 drinking drivers were arrested. It is not known how many of the other 1,162 drivers were issued citations for non-alcohol-related violations.

Feedback is being provided to the participating agencies in the form of a statistical chart (Table 1), which lists each agency and the number of calls, contacts, and arrests received by each agency. These data are forwarded to participating agencies periodically to keep them informed of the program's success as well as their commitment to the program goals of promoting highway safety in Maryland through law enforcement cooperation, professionalism, and coordination. In addition, the information is being used to inform the public as to the success of their efforts in reducing alcohol-related crashes.

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

During the fall of 1982 the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) conducted a survey of five states (Washington, Colorado, Nebraska, Utah, and Maryland) that had implemented programs designed to increase public awareness of the drunk driving problem and to encourage citizen involvement to help eradicate it. Early program statistics for these states are given in Table 2.

Nebraska credits its REDDI Program with a 26 percent reduction in highway fatalities during the first 12 months of operation. More significant, when comparing June 1980 through May 1981 with June 1981 through May 1982, Nebraska authorities report a 10 percent decline in fatal accidents involving alcohol. Although there may be other factors that contribute to this decline, the NTSB reports that it could not identify any significant changes in Nebraska's enforcement policy or procedures that would have served as a catalyst for this reduction.

The five programs surveyed by NTSB had been implemented by either the state highway or highway law enforcement agencies or both. Based on the positive results of these state programs, NTSB forwarded to the governors of the 50 states and to the mayor of the District of Columbia a highway safety recommendation (H-82-35), which stated they should "implement a citizens awareness and citizens drunk driving reporting program such as the REDDI type programs used by Washington, Colorado, Nebraska, Utah, and Maryland."

During the spring of 1983 the Alliance of American Insurers, located in Chicago, joined with REACT International, Incorporated, to form the CB Coalition. This coalition is credited with development of the Impaired Driver Alert Program. This program, according to Gerald Reese, Executive Director of REACT and L.C. Christopher, Vice-President/Communications, Alliance of American Insurers, "is designed to encourage the use of CB radios to provide emergency help for disabled motorists and to deter drunk driving."

In June 1983 the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) forwarded correspondence to state agency administrators informing them that there is "considerable renewed interest in the use of Citizen Band Radios to alert highway patrols and local authorities of any vehicle being operated in a dangerous, erratic manner indicating the driver may be impaired by alcohol, drugs, sudden illness, or other problems." In response to this communication, Colonel W.T. Travers, Jr., Superintendent of the Maryland State Police, submitted a resolution on June 21, 1983, at a regional IACP Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, which was adopted, in support of citizen DWI reporting. It is Colonel Travers' belief that "such programs can serve as viable short-term general deterrent DWI countermeasure efforts." He personally urges "all states to adopt similar programs to further their efforts in reducing alcohol-related deaths and injuries."

TABLE 1 Results of Maryland's Citizens Report Drunk Driving Program as of 7/4/83

ENFORCEMENT AGENCY	REPORTS	CONTACTS	ARRESTS
BALTO CITY P.D.	467	121	106
ANNE ARUNDEL P.D.	550	43	14
ANNAPOLIS P.D.	80	7	5
BALTIMORE CO. P.D.	1,793	732	91
DEPT. NATUREAL RESOURCES	1	1	0
TOLL FACILITIES	141	68	25
HOWARD COUNTY P.D.	275	47	47
EMMITSBURG P.D.	0	0	0
FREDERICK CITY P.D.	5	4	4
THURMONT P.D.	0	0	0
FREDERICK CO. SHERIFF	1	1	1
WESTMINSTER P.D.	48	7	7
ELKTON P.D.	9	4	1
ABERDEEN P.D.	15	2	0
BELAIR P.D.	0	0	0
PRINCE GEORGE'S CO. P.D.	346	99	37
ROCKVILLE CITY P.D.	0	0	0
MONTGOMERY COUNTY P.D.	1,028	904	223
CAMBRIDGE CITY P.D.	0	0	0
HURLOCK P.D.	0	0	0
OCEAN CITY P.D.	1	2	0
BERLIN P.D.	1	1	1
SALISBURY P.D.	0	0	0
EASTON P.D.	42	10	3
WASHINGTON CO. SHERIFF	25	5	3
ALLEGANY SHERIFF	0	0	0
CUMBERLAND CITY P.D.	30	21	14
WILLIAMSPORT P.D.	1	0	0
MARYLAND STATE POLICE	4,047	1,270	667
GRAND TOTAL	9,134	3,348	1,251

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TABLE 2 State Citizen Participation Programs

State	Program	Program Evaluation Time Period	No. of Months	Total No. of Calls and CB Reports	Total Contacts		Total Arrests for DWI	
					No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Colorado	REDDI	December 1980 to July 1982	20	13,274	1,701	20	1,661	62
Maryland	Citizens Report Drunk Driver Program	July 1 to August 29, 1982	2	1,623	500	31	230	46
Nebraska	REDDI	June 1981 to May 1982	12	2,836	1,827	64	1,428	78
Utah	REDDI	May 1 to June 30, 1982	2	262	102	38	76	74
Washington	Poster Girl	March 1980 to July 1982	27	8,000	1,400	18	1,000	71

It appears that the CB radio is again a viable communications network that can be used toward the enhancement of highway safety, except that this time highway safety advocates are providing the impetus.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Maryland's citizen reporting program has proved to be effective in increasing public awareness of the drinking driver problem and identifying hazardous drivers. Moreover, these citizen reports have resulted in increased arrest totals and sometimes criminal apprehensions. Examples of these are as follows:

1. In August 1982 a citizen made personal contact with a trooper to report a drunk driver. This notification resulted in an arrest of a DWI with three prior convictions for DWI.

2. In November 1982 a trooper assigned to the Special Traffic Enforcement Unit received a report

of a drunk driver over the CB radio. He subsequently stopped the vehicle and arrested the operator. A search incident to the arrest revealed 14,995 methaqualone tablets, with a street value of nearly \$50,000. In addition, a small quantity of cocaine and marijuana was confiscated.

Aside from creating a general deterrent against drinking and driving, citizen reporting programs have been established by NHTSA as one of the supplemental grant criteria elements under 23 CFR Part 1209, Incentive Grant Criteria Safety Programs, that states may adopt to become eligible for additional federal 408 funding.

There is little doubt that without the availability of CB radio equipment this program would not have been as successful as the numbers might reveal. Moreover, there is no substantive or pragmatic conclusion that can be drawn as to the impact this program had on reducing alcohol-related highway fatalities in Maryland. However, it is safe to conclude that the increased public awareness aspect of

this program, coupled with the increased risk and perception of risk by the drinking driver of being detected and arrested, has in some way contributed to the greatest single annual decline in Maryland highway fatalities during the past decade. The 1,200 alcohol-related arrests have contributed to the largest total number of DWI arrests ever recorded in Maryland. In 1982 there were 33,556 alcohol-related arrests, which represented a 42 percent increase over 1981 totals and a 115 percent increase over 1980.

SUMMARY

Citizen reporting programs are working in many areas of the country. The structure and success of each program varies, depending on the availability of funding and resources.

A national survey of REDDI-type programs conducted by NTSB in March 1983 revealed that about one-half of the states surveyed indicated that the increased public awareness, which these programs bolster, was more important than the increased number of DWI arrests.

Because of the attention that these programs have received, perhaps drivers are more cognizant of the perils of drinking and driving. Moreover, the increased risk of the DWI offender being detected, reported, and subsequently arrested may have contributed to the overall national decline in highway deaths.

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