



**Monthly Report** – January 2013 -- Vol. 1, No. 1

### **3 Steps To Reduce Crash Deaths in a Decade**

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**The Problem** – In the year 2013, the total number of crash deaths in the U.S.A. since 1900 now exceeds 3,585,000 people. The number injured is estimated to exceed 255,000,000. That is 5 times the number of Americans who died and 150 times the number wounded in all wars since 1776. <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/clock.php>

In 2013, the National Academy of Sciences reports that the U.S. ranks last in mortality from transportation injuries. *“In 2009, the United States had the highest death rate from transportation related accidents among the 17 peer countries...”* See *Shorter Lives, Poorer Health*, p. 32, available at [http://nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=13497](http://nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13497)

Currently **each day**, about 100 Americans die of crash injuries, 400 survive serious injuries, and losses increase by about \$750 million. The government does not count the tears of these tragic human losses.

**The Promise** – Using NHTSA data since 1965, auto safety programs are estimated to have saved more than 500,000 lives and mitigated about 2,000,000 crash injuries. (NHTSA HS 809833) Now we can and must do better.

Today there are more scientists and engineers worldwide working with more sophisticated technological capabilities to advance safety in the three phases of crash injuries. We can now do more (a) to avoid crash deaths e.g. backup cameras (b) to protect during a crash e.g. rollover side curtain air bags, and (c) to provide timely, optimal, rescue of crash victims using automatic crash notification (ACN) systems.

**The Need** – In President Obama’s first term, more Americans died of crash injuries than died in the Afghanistan, Iraq, and Viet Nam wars combined. (NHTSA HS 811706) Of all people who currently die of crash injuries about 56% are not taken to **any** facility for emergency medical care. And of the remaining 44% of crash fatalities that are taken to a medical facility for treatment, many receive less than timely, optimal, emergency rescue and medical care. The result is rescue that is too little, too late, for too many of the 100 American crash fatalities each day. Let’s not let them just die there along our roads. See “Killed in U.S. Crashes 1978-2011” at [www.careforcrashvictims.com](http://www.careforcrashvictims.com)

#### **First, Set A Goal To Bring Crash Victims Home Alive**

We have recently passed the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of President Kennedy’s speech in which he said: *“I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.”*

*"I believe we possess all the resources and talents necessary. But the facts of the matter are that we have never made the national decisions or marshaled the national resources required for such leadership. We have never specified long-range goals on an urgent time schedule, or managed our resources and our time so as to insure their fulfillment..."*

Applying that "can do" spirit today, we can abolish preventable crash deaths and serious injuries in a decade. We, the people, need such leadership to build safer vehicles, safer roads, and a more effective emergency medical care infrastructure capable of returning motorists home alive.

Imagine a goal that the nation will achieve Golden Hour medevac for serious crashes of 1 hour or less by the year 2020 here in the U.S.A. President Obama's Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has already set and met that goal in Afghanistan.

*"JIM LEHRER: Mr. Secretary, much has been written and said about your last four and a half years as secretary of defense. And a lot of people have been assessing your performance. What do you think of the way you've performed as secretary of state the last - secretary of defense the last four and half years?"*

***ROBERT GATES:** "I will say that I think that the thing I'm proudest of is what I've been able to do for our troops, giving them these heavily armored vehicles, these Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles; **giving them one-hour medevac or less in Afghanistan...** trying to do whatever was necessary to help them accomplish their mission and come home safely." (Emphasis added)"* Source: [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june11/gates\\_06-23.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june11/gates_06-23.html)

We can do this in America. NHTSA published a paper in 2005 on what we can do. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/urgency.php>

## **Second, Measure American Injuries**

Each day the President receives the President's Daily Brief on international situations from the Director of National Intelligence - but none from a Director of Injury Reduction.

The National Safety Council's *Injury Facts 2011* edition reports that during the Great Recession year of 2009 there were an estimated 3.5 million medically consulted injuries that occurred in 2,400,000 crashes. Among those 3.5 million injuries were about 150,000 serious injuries that included amputations, burns, brain and spinal cord injuries, disfigurements, and other serious injuries that currently are not specifically counted by the U.S. government. Not by NHTSA. Not by CDC. Not by NTSB. Not by DHS. Not by NIH. Not by HHS.

We need to count – not just estimate – the number and severity of serious crash injuries. It is unacceptable in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for the government to not document the incidence, prevalence, and consequences of serious injuries such as paraplegia, and quadriplegia.

In all 50 States we need to study the fatal and serious injury crashes, the injuries, the treatments, outcomes, and human and economic consequences on individuals, families, and society. Where are these people and families that suffered serious injuries? How are they doing? What are their outcomes – physical and social? What are the costs of Health Care, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security Disability Funds, and State Budgets? How can we do better?

You can't manage that which is not measured. So let us measure crash deaths and serious injuries and publish the data in a Monthly Injury Report to the American people.

### **Third, Leadership**

As Nader has noted *“This country has far more problems than it deserves, and far more solutions than it applies.”* To get the safety, jobs, and reduced healthcare costs here at home, we need effective political leadership.

We saw President Obama rightly shed tears for the 20 children killed in the Connecticut shooting by a madman. And he was moved by this tragedy to rightly convene a group led by VP Biden to recommend actions including issuing Executive Orders to help prevent such tragedies. That is the kind of leadership we need to care for crash victims, too. Both President Obama and VP Biden understand the tragedies of crash deaths through family experiences. See <http://www.fairwarning.org/2012/09/a-strange-indifference-to-highway-carnage/>

On an average day in America, of the 100 Americans who die of crash injuries, one is a child 5-9 years of age. Another 150 children ages 5-9 suffer crash injuries daily. See NHTSA 811659, Table 57, p. 92. Imagine an Executive Order by the President creating a Director of Injury Reduction to report monthly on progress in reducing injuries to the American people.

Members of the legislative and executive branches of government need to see political carrots and sticks to do the right thing. Lobbyists in Washington currently are working on transportation funding legislation seeking many billions of dollars and need bipartisan support. Politico recently reported that lobbyists are exploring funding sources such as new taxes on gasoline and carbon, more tolls, fees on VMT, and energy production.

Imagine if the President announced he would not sign any legislation that did not allocate \$2 billion per year (= <1% of annual fatal crash costs) to crash injury reduction programs at the Federal and State levels of government. Employ paramedics, firefighters, police, and academics at Schools of Public Health, Engineering, Medicine, Law and Journalism in each State. Charge them with reducing U.S. crash deaths and serious crash injuries.

Imagine President Obama setting a national goal to achieve a 50% reduction in crash fatality rates by the year 2020. If by 2020, the national average was halved to as low as Massachusetts achieved in 2010 i.e. less than 5 fatalities per 100,000 population, the nation would save about 15,000 lives each year.

So as President Obama starts his second term, we, the people, need to ask:

1. Will as many Americans die of crash injuries in his term as died in his first term (132,250)?

NHTSA recently reported a 7% increase in crash fatalities in the first 9 months of 2012, so we are on track to do worse, not better in the next four years when more American lives were lost to crash injuries than Americans died in the Afghanistan, Iraq, and Viet Nam wars combined. The President says he wants to do better in his second term. But unless he adopts better policies, we are on track to continue to lose nearly 100 lives each day to crash injuries and several hundred more Americans suffering serious crash injuries each day. Source: NHTSA Report 811706

2. Will the President follow his own words and example on the gun issue to prevent comparable tragedies affecting individuals, families, and society that result from vehicular carnage?

The President rightly noted that in the one month, since the Newtown tragedy: *“more than 900 of our fellow Americans have reportedly died at the end of a gun – 900 in the past month. And every day we wait, that number will keep growing....if there is even one life that can be saved, then we’ve got an obligation to try. And I am going to do my part. As soon as I am finished speaking here, I will sit at that desk and I will sign a directive giving law enforcement, schools, mental health professionals and the public health community some of the tools they need to reduce gun violence.”* Bravo! And now the 2,500 crash victims who die and nearly 10,000 seriously injured each month need a similar Presidential commitment.

3. Will the President ask VP Biden to convene meetings and make recommendations on this larger number of tragedies?

Both the President and VP know first hand of the personal tragedies resulting from family members who died of crash injuries. And they have the power, responsibility, and skills to make the political progress on protecting crash victims that has been paralyzed for too long. With all the misguided talk about a Debt ceiling, we need leadership that the President and VP are in a position to provide. Change the focus to a Death ceiling on deaths – by guns and by crashes. The basis for gaining bipartisan support for crash injury reduction is at hand.

All Americans would benefit from bipartisan support of crash injury reduction efforts. The tools for building bipartisan support are available and just await application. See <http://www.fairwarning.org/2012/11/traffic-deaths-a-surprising-dimension-of-the-red-state-blue-state-divide/>

Yes, we can take these steps.