



SHARING SOLUTIONS

A Community Approach to Tribal Traffic Safety



Working together to benefit Native American communities is the central purpose of Tribal Safety Summits sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Federal Lands Highway.

Purpose

Since 2008, the FHWA has sponsored five Tribal Safety Summits in Arizona, Minnesota, Washington, Wisconsin, and New Mexico to give Tribal leaders and others an opportunity to focus on critical road safety issues that take the lives of more than 700 Native Americans each year (NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts 2007).

The ultimate goal is to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries. The Summits are a first step in engaging state and local Tribal safety partners in a discussion on the nature and extent of the traffic safety problems on Tribal lands and ways to address those problems. While the FHWA assists the states and Tribes with the Summits, the Tribes should take ownership in implementing Summit outcomes.

At the Summits, participants do the following:

- ◆ Identify safety needs, resources, and solutions;
- ◆ Get to know and build relationships with safety partners to continue to work collaboratively;
- ◆ Share best practices and lessons learned; and
- ◆ Commit to action items to build on the success of the Summits.



Minnesota Tribal Safety Summit participants discuss issues and solutions during breakout sessions.

“This is a unique opportunity for us to come together, discuss issues, learn from each other, and begin developing solutions for improving safety on our Tribal roadways.”

Kevin Leecy, Bois Forte Chairman

Participants

To ensure the Summit covers all aspects of traffic safety, participants should represent the 4Es of safety – engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency medical services (EMS) – and include individuals responsible for safety data. Attendees should include the following:

- ◆ Representatives from all Tribes within a state (enforcement, education, engineering, EMS);
- ◆ State Department of Transportation and Highway Safety Office;
- ◆ Federal agencies (FHWA, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service);
- ◆ Regional Tribal Technical Assistance Program; and
- ◆ Other transportation safety partners and nontraditional partners such as educational institutions and private organizations.

Format

The one-day event involves the following activities:

- ◆ Plenary sessions with Federal, state, and Tribal speakers;
- ◆ Breakout group discussions;
- ◆ Resource information tables; and
- ◆ Final report outlining next steps.

Following the Summit, a task force or group should continue to meet to track progress on implementing Summit recommendations.



Summit Preparation

A number of tasks should be conducted prior to the Summit to make sure the meeting achieves the goal of identifying solutions for traffic safety problems on Tribal lands. Following are some pre-Summit planning steps Tribal leaders should follow in hosting the event:

- ◆ Organize a planning committee representing the 4Es and various levels of government that meets regularly via conference calls;
- ◆ Conduct meeting logistics (date, time, location, speakers, etc.);
- ◆ Review information on critical Tribal safety needs in the state;
- ◆ Determine specific conference objectives;
- ◆ Prepare summit agenda to meet objectives;
- ◆ Identify and invite speakers; and
- ◆ Conduct participant outreach/recruiting, ensuring representation from Tribes and other stakeholders represent the 4Es.

Results

The previous Summits identified key issues related to improving traffic safety on Tribal lands, including the need for better coordination and trust between Tribal and state officials; data reporting, collection, and analysis; Tribal education and training; and Tribal transportation safety planning.

Participants identified challenges; discussed opportunities, resources, and solutions; and made commitments to move forward toward their goal of improved traffic safety on Tribal roadways.

Arizona

Participants identified teen drivers as a key focus area and recommended more be done to educate these new drivers on alcohol and drug use and driving, safety belt use, and the difference between driving on Tribal and state lands.

Minnesota

Data was a major focus at the Summit since many of the Tribes do not have adequate data management or analysis capabilities. Participants worked hard to overcome trust issues on data sharing and agreed to work with the State on data reporting and analysis.

Washington State

Tribal leaders brought results from the Summit to their annual Centennial Accord meeting with the Governor. Four of the action items from the Accord were recommended by the Safety Summit.



Participants in the Arizona Tribal Summit engineering breakout session discuss potential solutions.

Wisconsin

The integral link between enforcement and engineering, as it relates to crash data and the vested interest of saving lives, particularly Native American lives in and around the tribal community, was highlighted. All attendees went away from the Summit with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the roles each of the 4Es plays in Tribal safety, and a stronger professional and organizational commitment to reach out to each other in solving the issues in Tribal safety.

New Mexico

Participants identified the need to develop cooperative agreements between the Tribes and the State to improve a variety of programs, including data, engineering, and enforcement. Attendees also placed a high priority on establishing inter-Tribal coalitions to improve communication and cooperation.

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