

Clear the Road Law Activated in the State

Drivers in Central Oklahoma are being asked to “clear the road” if involved in a non-injury collision. “Clear the road” is not just a marketing catch phrase, either. As of last month, it’s “the law.”

“For every minute that a crash remains on the road, traffic is delayed an average of five additional minutes,” said Joe McDonald, Director of the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office (OHSO). “The longer traffic is delayed, the more likely another more serious accident may occur.”

HB 1782, also known as the “quick clearance” bill, requires motorists in non-injury accidents to move their vehicles off of the road, before law enforcement and accident investigators arrive on the scene.

The bill was promoted as both a congestion management and public safety measure. In Oklahoma, incidents including vehicle accidents and spilled cargo account for 60 percent of urban roadway congestion. In addition to the primary accident, secondary accidents often occur from unwary drivers coming upon the situation, or curious drivers stopping



Joe McDonald, Oklahoma Highway Safety Office director, presents information on the new “clear the road” law that’s now in effect. The law requires motorists to move vehicles off the road in non-injury accidents.

suddenly to “look” at the scene. A transportation study indicated that secondary collisions caused up to 18 percent of all peak-period accidents and 18 percent of overall fatalities in accidents.

Prior to the new law, many motorists involved in vehicle accidents remained in the street or intersection waiting on authorities. Currently, a public education campaign is underway to inform citizens. There is a grace period until the end of the

year so people can become informed. Motorists involved in incidents that don’t comply with the law after January 1, 2004, could be issued citations.

ACOG’s transportation committees spearheaded the measure in 2001 when studying congestion and incident management, and it became one of the primary recommendations of the ACOG Incident Management task force.

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Regional Legislative Issues Prioritized for 2003-2004

Results from a recent forum and survey have helped ACOG to develop a prioritized list of federal and state legislative issues and concerns in the region.

ACOG membership that responded to the survey or attended the forum held in the fall included: Bethany, Calumet, Canadian County, Del City, Edmond, El Reno, Guthrie, Harrah, Lexington, Logan County, Mustang, Nicoma Park, Noble, Norman, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County,

Okarche, Piedmont, Slaughterville, The Village and Yukon.

Following are the Top Ten federal and state issues, ranked in order of importance to ACOG membership:

Federal Issues:

1. Prohibit unfunded federal mandates. Provide adequate funding to communities to meet policies. ...See “Issues” on page three.

Winter Brings Indoor, Outdoor, Carbon Monoxide Concerns

The holiday season brings yule tidings, but it is also accompanied by cold weather. And cold weather ushers in carbon monoxide (CO) season, which may pose a threat to the region's air quality status.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless and poisonous gas that can interfere with the delivery of oxygen to the body. Health effects vary based on intensity of exposure, but infants, elderly persons and individuals with respiratory diseases are particularly sensitive.

Motor vehicles and two-cycle gasoline power engines, as a result of incomplete fuel combustion in cold weather, cause a large percentage of carbon monoxide pollution. Higher CO levels generally occur between November and February

on clear, low-wind days when air temperature is between 35 and 40 degrees. The evening rush hours are sometimes problematic, due to the high concentration of motor vehicles in areas such as shopping centers and major intersections.

Carbon monoxide emissions increase in cold weather because motor vehicles need more fuel to start in cold temperatures, and because some emission control devices, such as oxygen sensors and catalytic converters, operate less efficiently when they are cold.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes the regulations for carbon monoxide levels. For the region to meet the CO standard, it cannot have more than one episode per year where the eight-hour CO value exceeds the threshold.

Since the Clean Air Act Amendments in 1990, the Central Oklahoma region has exceeded the federal standards only once, in 1994. There hasn't been a Carbon Monoxide Alert Day issued since 1996.

Officials with the state Department of Environmental Quality believe that the

region's CO levels have been diminishing in recent years due to newer, cleaner and more environmentally sound motor vehicles replacing older models on the road.

A related, and more serious carbon monoxide concern that also accompanies winter is the potential for indoor carbon monoxide poisoning. People stay indoors more often in cold weather and the use of space heaters increases proportionately. Each year, more

than 1,700 children age five and under across the country are poisoned by carbon monoxide.

Homeowners should look at hidden dangers such as malfunctioning furnaces, water heaters, ovens, stoves, gas-fired dryers, clogged chimneys, and space heaters as potential sources of CO.

Home-owners should consider purchasing a carbon monoxide detector and having all CO sources checked out to make sure they are operating correctly. Local fire departments will respond to homes when a carbon monoxide detector is activated.



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Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

*"Providing Regional Leadership in
Central Oklahoma Since 1966"*

Established in 1966, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is a voluntary association of cities, towns and counties. ACOG helps member governments plan for common needs, cooperate for mutual benefit and coordinate for sound regional development.

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EMSA Works Out Mercy Transition

Starting last month, the Emergency Medical Service Authority (EMSA), which provides ambulance service to a large portion of the region, increased its service capacity with the addition of seven Central Oklahoma communities.

EMSA increased its coverage area to Bethany, Mustang, Nichols Hills, Piedmont, The Village, Warr Acres and Yukon, as a result of Mercy Health Center's announcement that it would discontinue service to these communities prior to November.

Mercy Health Center made the announcement in the fall that its ambulance service had become an economic setback, and that it was no longer feasible to continue operating the service. Census 2000 population data indicates that EMSA now has 82,100 new customers in the seven communities, in addition to the communities it already serves, including a large portion of Oklahoma County.

The transition to EMSA has been fairly seamless, and suffered few setbacks, thanks to regional organizational planning and communication. EMSA officials have hired a large percentage of paramedics and EMT personnel that formerly worked for Mercy. Ambulances are now stationed in the new communities to respond to emergencies faster.

EMSA has picked up the new communities and is not charging a subsidy to the cities until next fiscal year, when annual agreements come up for renewal. Because of the timing of Mercy's service interruption, EMSA felt it best to continue service without a surcharge.

The 9-1-1 Association has been working closely with the communities' public safety answering points to ensure that databases and procedures are running smoothly. Call Stephen Willoughby, ACOG, with any questions.

“Legislative Issues”

...Continued from page one.

2. Continue federal support for community development programs.
3. Continue to support the viability of Tinker Air Force Base.
4. Implement the collection of local and state sales taxes on mail order, catalog and Internet sales.
5. Provide funding to communities to meet Phase II stormwater mandates.
6. Provide appropriations for transportation legislation.
7. Evaluate the effects of union controls over local government expenses.
8. Preserve local authorities regarding rights-of-way fees.
9. Continue to fund Homeland Security grants to local communities.
10. Limit attorney’s fees in civil rights cases involving local governments.

State Issues:

1. Oppose exemption of sales taxes on groceries.
2. Increase support for funding of Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP).
3. Continue to reduce Workers’ Comp expenses.
4. Leave local personnel issues to local decision makers.
5. Help reduce health costs for public and private employers.
6. Revamp local municipal finance systems with a clear delineation of revenue sources.
7. Allow “no prior notice” to remain a viable defense for cities in tort claims.
8. Support state appropriations for councils of government.
9. Reassess motor fuel and vehicle taxes for highway maintenance.
10. Encourage state support for timely completion of regional highways.

“Clear the Road”

...Continued from page one.

A state-wide effort to implement the law has involved ACOG, OHSO, Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police, Indian Nations Council of Government and regional law enforcement agencies. Training sessions for local law enforcement are ongoing.



Around the Region

- The **Fire Prevention Bureau** of the city of **Norman** was recently selected as the state’s Fire Investigative Unit of the year at the annual conference of the **Association of Arson Investigators**. The annual award was presented to the bureau for its dedicated service in the prevention of arson. Norman Fire Inspector **Darryl Troupe** also received individual awards for arson photography. The city also participates in **Operation FireSAFE**, the region’s juvenile fire-setting prevention program.

- **Edmond** Mayor **Saundra Naifeh** was honored by the **Governor’s Arts Awards** with the **George Nigh Mayor’s Award** at the group’s recent annual ceremony. Naifeh was recognized for outstanding support of art at the community level, by helping establish the **Edmond Visual Arts Commission**. The city of Edmond has installed several public art works in the past year

- The **Central Oklahoma Clean Air Committee** recently recognized several key regional stakeholders for contributions that have helped the region maintain its good air quality status. **Redbud Energy**, a natural gas powered electricity producing plant, the **Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce**, **Cox Communications**, **Cox Media** and **OGE Electric Services** were lauded by the group for financial and staff contributions that have helped make the annual award-winning program one of the most recognized public education campaigns in the region.

- **Robert Annis** has been named Deputy Director of the **Oklahoma City Urban Renewal Authority**. Annis formerly served the city of Purcell as

city manager, and comes to the Authority with a wealth of experience. The Authority has played a vital role in the urbanized region’s recent commercial and residential redevelopment.

- **ACOG** presented six communities in the region with automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to be used for emergencies involving cardiac arrest. The state of Oklahoma ranks second in the nation in cardiovascular deaths. The AED program was funded by a grant from the **Health Resources Services Administration**. The **Oklahoma State Department of Health** purchased the units for statewide distribution. Based on federal grant criteria, only certain zip codes within **Logan** and **Canadian** counties were eligible for the devices. Those receiving the units in Central Oklahoma included the **Coyle Fire Department**, Coyle; **Calumet Police Department**, Calumet; **Orlando Volunteer Fire Department**, Orlando; **Town of Union City**; **Twin Lakes Fire Department**, Crescent; and one each for **El Reno** police and fire departments.



Kevin Watkins, with Cardiac Science, Inc., demonstrates how AED units work.

Festive Events Spotlight Holidays

A winter celebration will take place this month in downtown Oklahoma City as the region presents a slew of family activities for "Downtown in December." Bob Howard Auto Groups is the primary sponsor for the month of events, which is being promoted by Downtown Oklahoma City Inc. There are numerous events that have been supplemented by corporate and community sponsors. Some of the premier events include:

- A holiday parade through downtown and Bricktown on December 6, capped with the lighting of the Christmas tree, sponsored by The Oklahoman. The annual parade is celebrating its 20th year.
- The Braum's outdoor Ice Rink, in its second year, will be open all month in front of the Civic Center Music Hall. This year's rink will be substantially larger than last year's. The rink was one of the more popular attractions last holiday season.
- Outdoor lights at the Myriad Gardens and Crystal Bridge will beckon visitors for a walking tour of the park. Crews have spent weeks stringing the lights for the massive display.
- Metro Transit will have a Holiday Spirit bus trolley line. Adult fares are only 25 cents for rides in downtown

December 2003

- 11th Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 18th 9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m.
Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m.
ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m.
Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.
- 25th-26th ACOG Offices Closed for Holiday Season

January 2004

- 1st ACOG Offices Closed for New Year's Day
- 15th Areawide Planning Technical Advisory Committee, 9 a.m.
Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
- 19th ACOG Offices Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 20th Operation FireSAFE, 10 a.m.
Clean Cities Stakeholders, 1 p.m.
- 30th 9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m.
Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m.
ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m.
Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.

at a variety of event stops. For complete seasonal details, visit Metro Transit's new Web site at www.gometro.org.

- Of course, Central Oklahomans can bring in the New Year and celebrate at the Arts Council of Oklahoma City's annual Opening Night event on New

Year's Eve. The family program has become a holiday tradition in recent years. Visit www.artscouncilokc.com for details.

For a complete list of Downtown in December events, activities and maps, visit www.downtownokc.com, or call the event hotline at 236-3640.

Central Oklahoma

Perspective

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