

PRESS RELEASE

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HIGHWAY SAFETY – THE GRUESOME GAP

Highway and road network is a mark of pride and achievement for Nations across the globe. Sadly, this very lifeline of nations, states and the last little principality across the world is witness to one of the largest killer of the human race.

As much as the highway and road network act as a catalyst for development and progress to a geographical region, it also contributes to accidents and fatalities that are often disastrous for the stakeholders involved. It is not only those that are directly involved in such incidents that are affected, but also the whole ecosystem bears its brunt.

WHO in its 2018 status report states death due to road accidents has reached an alarming 1.35 million annually i.e. 1 person killed every 25 seconds, and leaves about 50 million people injured. These fatalities and injuries with prolonged medical care and resulting nonattendance in productive activity leads to losses not only for individuals and groups, but also affects nations at a macro level.

India finds its place in the global list of moderately accident prone countries. On a global scale, though our vehicular population is just 1% of the world, we account for 6% of road accidents in the world. In 2018, reported deaths were in the region of 4,67,000 +, road accidents alone caused a slide of almost 5% of the GDP.

36% of death by road accidents in India involved two-wheelers and 15% of death by road accident involved pedestrians. The main cause of deaths in road accidents were Speeding and Drink & Drive. Indiscipline on roads and using mobile phone while driving also are major offences.

Maharashtra, though a highly progressive State which is on an even faster development curve, is among the top 3 States with the highest road accidents in India.

With 34 National Highways approximating 17000 KMs, connecting Maharashtra to its six neighboring States, and State Highway of around 35,000 KMs Maharashtra has the largest road network in India. The State also has claim to have the first access controlled toll road project in India, the 95 km long Yeshwantrao Chavan Mumbai-Pune Expressway. 99.5 per cent of the villages in the state are connected by all-weather roads as of March 2018.

In 2018, more than 27 lakh vehicles were registered in Maharashtra State out of which around 19.96 lakh were two wheelers and around 3.62 lakh four wheeler LMVs. Till 2018, around 3.3 crore vehicles are registered in the State out of which 2.41 crore are two wheelers and 46.32 lakhs four-wheeler in LMV category.

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In Maharashtra, 13,261 deaths due to road accidents were reported in the year 2018. The major cause of road accidents was over-speeding and drunk driving followed by road indiscipline, using mobile phone while driving, non-compliance of using helmets and seat belts, overtaking and jumping signals.

The highest incidents of road accidents leading to fatalities were reported from the districts of Nashik, Dhule, Palghar, Ahmednagar, Pune, Solapur, Osmanabad and Wardha.

The rate of fatality was the highest at 36% in accidents on Expressway followed by that on Highways - National and State at 33%. This also corroborate the fact that all accidents and collisions involving high speed increases fatality manifold.

More than 50% of the accidents happens on other roads or non-highways indicating, from among other reasons, that improper road conditions and infrastructure is a major cause of accidents and fatalities here is 27%.

In studies and researches over time and geographies, it is often observed that some things are systemic in the causes and handling of road accidents. It is but a fact, that as countries develop and progress, the rate of accidents diminish, and the poorer and developing and under-developed countries and regions are not only highly prone and vulnerable, these countries are also inept in handling the cases effectively, leading to increased fatalities. So, it is safe to say, that better infrastructure helps in progressively controlling accidents and fatalities.

Conversely speaking, modern developments in mobile telephony and digital entertainment on the go is a major cause of concern and contributor to the increasing road accidents. Ironically, the hi-speed vehicles are yet another bane of development that sees pushing the brutal craze of rapidity that is the woe of many youngsters.

Possibly, this explains the evolution of the E factor in road safety. As nations progress, it is better placed to develop and implement well engineered and well planned roadways and highways, improved traffic system. It can impart effective and consistent education and information dissemination. Assisting with better and prompt emergency response and medical care becomes a post incident rescuer diminishing fatalities. Imparting deterrents, warnings and enforcement that are more impactful leads to implementing preventive measures. Active and continuous study and analysis of patterns of occurrences, behaviors, attitudes and trends, field reports, infrastructure status, improvement needs, risks and accident prone areas help in evaluating and adopting measures and methods to improve for all future road and highway users.

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Maharashtra State Highway Police, under the stewardship of Shri Vinay Kargaonkar, ADGP (Traffic) Maharashtra, ably supported by Shri Vijay Patil, SP HQ Mumbai, along with Shri Digambar Pradhan, SP Thane Region, Shri Milind Mohite, SP Pune Region and Shri Sanjay Shintre, SP Nagpur Region with the active involvement of the officers and staff of the HSP.

Maharashtra have been driving various initiative to curb accidents and fatalities on the Highways in Maharashtra. The initiative covers a gamut of enforcement, education, evaluation and encouragement drives among stakeholders and highway users from time to time. The latest in its endeavor is the safety awareness campaign #HIGHWAYMANNERS.

Armed with the domain understanding that road transport being the most dangerous mode of transport as there aren't enough interventional safeguards, road traffic relies heavily on its users to avert incidents and accidents.

However, humans not only make mistakes, but also flaunt disdain in following rules and norms. This, coupled with compelling erratic behavior, which may trigger due to various influencing conditions, aggravate the problem of road accidents. Based on this premise, Maharashtra Highway Police has partnered with Indian Oil Corporation Limited and with inputs from People Advertising Pvt. Ltd. has strategized to convey messages to impact the behavior of highway user when on road or the highway. Through this exercise the efforts will be to condition the target group to bring about a change by inculcating the etiquettes and manners to be followed while on highway. At all walks of life, we face a situation or end up at a place where set decorum has to be practiced. Be it greeting a friend, elder or acquaintance. We behave in a particular way when we visit a place, a religious place, an official meeting, visit an organization, receive a guest or visit as a guest. These behavior patterns are imbibed by our elders, peers, mentors, society and culture. Following this very principles of inculcating good mannerism, the effort is to impart and introduce the highway users to highway manners... the do's and don'ts when you are on highway.

#HighwayManners - The most popular sign/symbol of our time has been tagged with the desired action to amplify behavioral change by rendering campaign delivery mechanism around it.

The campaign is initiated for the State of Maharashtra, covering all major National and State Highway network in the State. Major and popular touchpoints along the highway network have been identified for intervention and visibility exercise. It will be a year-long campaign which will be rolled out in phases every month along pre-identified routes.

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In continuance of its rich legacy of developing programs and initiative that has far reaching impact in transforming lives, Indian Oil Corporation Limited's (IOCL's) endeavor is to make #HighwayManners a success along with Maharashtra State Highway Police.

On the occasion of the #HighwayManners campaign launch announcement, Additional DGP (Traffic) Maharashtra, Shri Vinay Kargaonkar said "We have all seen that the statistics regarding road accidents and deaths in Maharashtra are appalling. The numbers have to be curtailed and the highways need to be made safe. We have partnered with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. to make this a reality."

Elaborating on the campaign #HighwayManners, Mr. Subodh Dakwale, Executive Director, CC & Branding, IOCL stated "IndianOil is happy to support the #HighwayManners campaign with the HSP to boost safe driving habits and create awareness regarding highway safety. Road transport remains a dangerous mode of transport as there aren't enough interventional safeguards. Through this campaign, our strategy will be to bring about a behavioural change in the highway user when on road or the highway. Through this exercise the efforts will be to condition the target group by inculcating the etiquettes and manners to be followed while on highway", he added."

Shri Vijay Patil, SP HQ concluded by saying "We, as team at HSP, will strategically implement the campaign. This campaign will be pivotal in bringing about the behavioural change which is the USP of #HighwayManners campaign.