

Think and Drive

In 2004, motor vehicle incidents caused 43% of all transport related injury deaths in Ontario. These avoidable incidents resulted in a \$598,787,149 total cost in Ontario alone. The Niagara region had one of the highest rates of fatal and serious injury motor vehicle collisions per capita compared to other Ontario regions (Table 1). The Think and Drive road safety social marketing and communication campaign was implemented in Niagara as one part of an overall road safety strategy aimed at reducing the number of serious collisions. The campaign was designed to encourage drivers to take personal responsibility for their driving. Think and Drive used a multi-pronged approach by combining road safety social marketing and communication with traffic enforcement in a pilot and expansion campaign. This approach targets driving behaviour and aims to reduce serious injuries and crashes.

Table 1. Fatal and serious injury motor vehicle collisions per capita

Source: Niiagara Reaional Police Service

Region	Population (K)	2004 Fatal	2004 Serious Injury	2004 Total	2005 Fatal	2004 Fatal and Serious per capita	2005 Fatal per capita
Durham	572	29	46	75	29	0.13	0.05
Halton	380	13	18	31	14	0.08	0.03
Hamilton	503	17	15	32	20	0.06	0.04
London	337	12	8	20	14	0.06	0.04
Niagara	431	30	40	70	28	0.16	0.06
Ottawa	774	31	47	78	22	0.10	0.03
Peel	989	26	16	42	20	0.04	0.02
Waterloo	498	16	23	39	16	0.08	0.03
Windsor	210	12	8	20	4	0.10	0.02
York	759	39	48	87	38	0.11	0.04

Strategy

The Regional Niagara Road Safety Committee (RNRSC) was formed in 2003 in response to the number of motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries on Niagara's roadways. The RNRSC partners each represented one component of a comprehensive injury prevention approach to road safety: education / evaluation; Niagara Region Public Health, enforcement; Niagara Regional Police Service, engineering; Niagara Region Public Works, and advocacy; CAA Niagara. A 5-year strategic plan was created, with the following goals:

- **A decrease of 10% in the number of serious motor vehicle collisions where factors relating to vehicles , driver actions, and the driving environment are of primary consideration, and**
- **An enhanced ability to effectively share road safety related information among the (RNRSC) partner agencies and the community.**

Think and Drive intended to address the goal related to "driver action". Two campaign periods were implemented; an initial 4-month pilot campaign in one Niagara municipality followed by a 15-month expansion campaign (Think and Drive campaign) across the Niagara region.

The Think and Drive campaign targeted drivers who lived and worked in all 12 municipalities of Niagara, with a particular focus on male drivers aged 16 to 40 years. The campaign's four key messages/themes (**speeding, driver error/distraction, impairment, and rural roads**) were incorporated into an overall communications and marketing plan using a number of vehicles such as website, Facebook group, posters, media publication ads, bookmarks, bus boards, etc.

The initial **Pilot Campaign** met its objectives of increasing: awareness about the Niagara crash problem, knowledge of related driving safety skills, and drivers' intentions to change their attitudes and behaviours in the pilot community. It achieved active participation by over 10% of the pilot community driving population, had grass-roots community support, and was recognized at the Ontario Road Safety Symposium in September 2006.

In light of the Pilot campaign successes, the Think and Drive campaign was expanded across Niagara using the derived recommendations. These recommendations were: ; **building capacity and partnerships, communications and social marketing, collaboration with partner agencies, combining enforcement and educational communication to change attitudes and behaviours, and, research and evaluation.** Communication strategies focused on:

1. media relations;
2. advertising and publicity; and
3. interactive/internet and social media.

Fundamental to the campaign was the involvement and support of the Niagara grass-roots community to enable access and encourage participation of the target audience.

The methodology of the Think and Drive campaign incorporated several methods of research and evaluation including:

1. a monthly survey conducted by Niagara Region Public Health known as the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS);
2. public opinion polls of Niagara residents at the beginning and end of the 15-month campaign;
3. an interactive "Niagara Road Safety Challenge" online survey featured throughout the campaign; and
4. monitoring and tracking resource distribution, community activities and events, and media response.

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Results

Upon evaluation, it was found that the Think and Drive campaign resulted in the following:

- A greater knowledge of road safety and its importance among Niagara citizens.
- Over 250,000 Think and Drive educational resources were distributed throughout Niagara.
- Increased awareness of Niagara's road safety issues among Niagara citizens. Respondents reported that as a result of the Think and Drive campaign 22% of them had significant or very significant increase in awareness of road safety driving issues and 26% believed they had somewhat of a change.
- A new widespread belief that crashes were a result of preventable behaviours behind the wheel such as speeding, drinking and driving, and aggressive behaviour.
- A belief among citizens that they had control over their chances of being involved in a serious motor vehicle collision.
- A common belief that by following messages such as pay attention while driving, slow down, avoid distractions and avoid using a cellphone, one could increase road safety for themselves and the region.
- An increased knowledge that the use of rural roads and cellphones were important factors that could result in serious road crashes.
- A belief that traffic enforcement and road safety education were the two most important strategies for authorities to use to reduce serious crashes.
- An increase in the percentage of drivers who self-reported that they would never participate in a number of risky driving behaviours.
- A belief among the primary target audience (males 16 to 40 years) that by changing personal behaviours to reduce speed and pay more attention while driving would reduce serious crashes.
- Overall, 32.2% of Niagara drivers were aware of the Think and Drive campaign, 11.3% had heard of the Think and Drive website, and there was a significant increase in campaign recognition between the middle and final campaign quarters.
- In total, 18% of respondents said there was a significant or very significant change in their driving habits over the prior 12 months and 19% of respondents said there had been somewhat of a change due to the Think and Drive campaign.
- Think and Drive website participation included over 15,000 visits, over 7,000 unique visitors, 4,400 individuals registered for prizes after completing the online survey, and community members contacted the RNRSC via the website to express support and offer help.
- "Think and Drive Niagara" Facebook group reached 561 members.
- Local media recognized road safety as a topic of interest to their readers, listeners and viewers as shown by the significant coverage of road safety issues over the past two years.
- RNRSC partner members have been routinely accessed by the media for road safety information and comments.
- Niagara decision makers and influencers recognize road safety as a priority issue.

Conclusions and Outcomes

The Think and Drive campaign achieved great success as indicated by the achievement of the original objectives.

This can be attributed to several factors:

- Target audiences were identified and the marketing materials were tailored to these groups.
- It followed the best practice model with a combination of communication and social marketing alongside increased traffic enforcement.
- The Pilot campaign evaluation was used to inform the planning and implementation of the region-wide Think and Drive campaign to enhance successes and improve on deficiencies.
- The use of a multi-pronged marketing and communication approach was effective in reaching all target audiences.
- The commitment, contributions and expertise of the RNRSC partner members and key stakeholders provided ongoing support throughout the campaign.
- Continuous evaluation prior to and throughout the campaign allowed it to be responsive and adaptable to community need and available opportunities.
- A comprehensive health promotion model of increasing knowledge and awareness, building skills and creating a supportive road safety environment for Niagara drivers was used.
- The wide breadth of information sharing and community involvement fostered awareness of Think and Drive and its key messages.
- The formation of partnerships with a wide range of organizations to promote the Think and Drive campaign raised the road safety profile in Niagara.

In the future any community wishing to implement a comparable campaign should consider using a similar strategy and community based approach to achieve success.

Next Steps

The Think and Drive campaign is being sustained across Niagara through:

- Think and Drive word banners mounted on 13 regional population signs, decals on CAA and regional vehicles, integration of Think and Drive into community based road safety groups, promotion at community events, and availability of Think and Drive resources.
- The Think and Drive website has been incorporated into the Niagara region website and the "Think and Drive Niagara" Facebook group is now hosted externally by a community member.
- Think and Drive messaging is incorporated into RNRSC partner communications, media releases and road safety related events.
- The development of a youth road safety strategy to engage youth aged 13 to 18 years old in road safety initiatives.
- Interest by other Ontario regions, agencies and groups in adopting Think and Drive into their road safety strategies.
- The RNRSC has four additional members: Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Ontario Provincial Police, Niagara Parks Police and Niagara Emergency Medical Services. The Think and Drive campaign continues to be an integral part of the overall RNRSC strategic plan for 2009-2013 addressing the continual need to educate drivers about road safety in order to sustain changes to driver actions.

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