

## RESEARCH BRIEF

# Developing Safe Winter Driving Messages That Target the High-Risk Driver

In 2007 after adopting the slogan “Ice & Snow ... Take It Slow,” Clear Roads launched the first national multimedia campaign to educate motorists about the importance of safe winter driving. Designed with the help of volunteer public information officers and winter maintenance professionals around the country, the campaign offers a standard logo and wide range of campaign materials that can be used as is or customized.

## Need for Research

With initial implementation of the “Ice & Snow” campaign complete, the Clear Roads partners turned their attention to fine-tuning delivery of the safe winter driving message. By learning more about the high-risk drivers who could most benefit from the safe winter driving message—who they are and the types of messages that are most effective in communicating with them—Clear Roads sought to refine the existing winter safety campaign to speak directly to this segment of drivers. With new campaign materials that target high-risk drivers, transportation agencies can make the most of the “Ice & Snow” campaign and contribute to the goal of reducing crashes, injuries and deaths related to winter driving.

## Objectives and Methodology

Researchers divided the project into three tasks:

- **Analyzing highway crash data.** First, researchers needed to know how to describe a high-risk driver. To do this, they analyzed 2008 crash data from Illinois and 2007 and 2008 crash data from Nebraska using two factors: number of winter-related crashes and ages of those involved in such crashes.
- **Developing and administering a survey instrument.** Using an online survey, researchers gathered information from individuals who met the criteria for a high-risk driver identified through highway crash data. Survey questions measured awareness of other social marketing campaigns, evaluated the effectiveness of various message types and identified how winter weather information is accessed.
- **Developing campaign materials and a distribution strategy.** Based on survey findings, researchers developed campaign materials that built on the current “Ice & Snow” campaign and provided guidance on effective use of the new materials.

## Results

The analysis of highway crash data indicated that the largest majority of crashes involved drivers between the ages of 15 and 30, with only 10 percent of the drivers involved in winter crashes described as impaired. The three most common factors for crashes in winter conditions are driving too fast for conditions, following too closely and failure to yield.

Using results of the crash data analysis, researchers turned their attention to developing a survey and identifying individuals who met the high-risk driver profile. In all, 490 participants were selected from 250 nationwide panels of licensed drivers who were between the ages of 16 and 34 and had driven in poor winter driving conditions.

Researchers found that awareness of Clear Roads’ “Ice & Snow” slogan was lower than that of other highway safety campaigns participants were asked about in the survey. However, of those who were aware of the Clear Roads safe winter driving message, eight out of 10 said that the campaign

### Investigator



“We developed a clear map of how to cost-effectively distribute the safe winter driving message and encourage awareness based on how high-risk drivers access winter road conditions.”

—Craig Barnes  
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## Project Champion



“Clear Roads had already developed a national winter driving safety campaign. This research will help Clear Roads member states better target their campaigns toward the riskiest winter drivers—the drivers with the greatest potential for behavioral changes.”

—Mike Sproul  
Wisconsin DOT  
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The project produced TV and Internet banner ads that feature a speedometer and the “Ice & Snow ... Take It Slow” logo.

changed behaviors. Results also indicated that most respondents identified driving too fast as the primary reason for winter weather driving crashes.

With the Clear Roads slogan resonating well among those who are aware of it and the target group’s awareness that driving too fast for conditions leads to winter weather crashes, researchers concluded that there is a significant opportunity for the “Ice & Snow” message to impact the behaviors of high-risk drivers. Survey results indicated that targeting the 16 to 24 age group will yield the greatest returns. Researchers found that this group prefers reality-based messaging and uses the Internet and television most often to obtain winter weather road conditions.

Armed with a greater understanding of their target audience, researchers developed new campaign materials that leveraged the equity developed in the original logo. Using a creative concept that features a speedometer and the “Ice & Snow” logo, researchers produced two Internet banner ads and a TV ad that can be used on air or on the weather-related pages of a local TV station’s Web site in 30-, 15- and seven-second segments.

In the TV ad, a speedometer appears as viewers hear the sounds of a car accelerating. As the speedometer needle reaches about 65 mph, viewers hear a radio weather forecast that says snow is imminent. Animated snow begins to fall as viewers hear the car decelerate and watch the speedometer needle fall to about 30 mph. The speedometer fades to black and is replaced with the “Ice & Snow” logo.

## Benefits and Further Research

With a greater knowledge of the high-risk driver and the information distribution channels most often used by this target audience, Clear Roads member states can make effective use of limited resources by delivering a focused, uniform safe winter driving message.

State-by-state implementation of the project’s action plan will vary according to the needs of each Clear Roads partner. Public information officers in each state can use the action plan as a starting point to deploy the TV and Web-based ads. Other strategies that public information officers can consider to deliver microtargeted advertising to high-risk drivers include creating a smart phone application that accesses a Clear Roads member’s “Ice & Snow” or road condition Web page, and the use of social media tools such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.

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This brief summarizes project CR2008-03, “Developing and Evaluating Safe Winter Driving Messages,” produced through the Clear Roads winter maintenance pooled fund project, #TPF-5(092). Clear Roads’ lead state for this research project is Wisconsin DOT, 4802 Sheboygan Ave., Madison, WI 53707. (In early 2010, Minnesota DOT took over as the lead state for the Clear Roads winter maintenance pooled fund project under TPF-5(218).) Paul Brown of Massachusetts Highway Department is the Clear Roads Technical Advisory Committee Chair (paul.brown@state.ma.us).

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