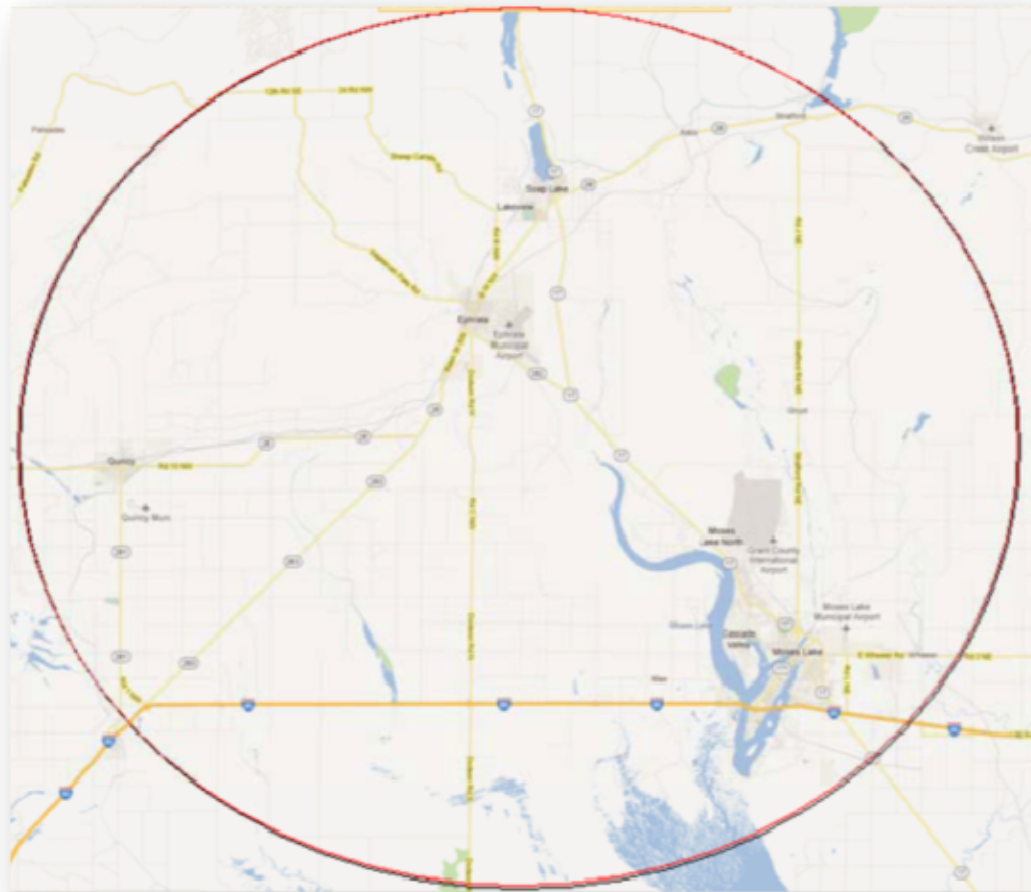


**2012 Herman Goldstein Award Submission
for
Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing**

Washington State Patrol Basin Triangle Project Detail



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**Washington State Patrol
Basin Triangle
Project Detail**

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THE BASIN TRIANGLE

“A REDUCTION OF SERIOUS INJURY AND FATALITY COLLISIONS”

SUMMARY

Between 2006 and 2010, there was a significant increase in the number of serious injury and fatality collisions in the Columbia River Basin Triangle. A high number of collisions occurred between Moses Lake, Ephrata, and the Soap Lake area involving teenage drivers. A majority of the erratically driven vehicle complaints were also from this area. In 2010, this project began in an attempt to stop the yearly increase of collisions resulting in death. The highways included in the project were Washington State Routes 17, 171, 28, 281, 282, 283, and Interstate 90. The cities included were Moses Lake, Ephrata, Soap Lake, George, and Quincy.

We gathered collision data for the area and found that there were several factors contributing to these collisions. Impaired driving, speed, driver inattention, texting or talking on cell phones, roadway structure, and weather were factors in most of the fatality and serious injury collisions in the project area.

Throughout 2011, our goal was to reduce the increasing trend of injury and fatality collisions in the Basin by at least 4% by December 31. Our Action Plan was to use three of the four E's (***Enforcement***, ***Engineering***, and ***Education***) listed in the Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan – Target Zero to reduce serious injury and fatal collisions within the “Basin Triangle.” (Since this project focused on collision prevention, the fourth “E” [***Emergency Medical Services***] was not part of the response).

On December 20, 2010, stakeholders were invited to attend a meeting about the project. They were asked for their input to help curtail the increasing problem of fatal and serious injury collisions.

Throughout 2011, several projects were set in place using the SARA model as a guide. At the end of 2011, we assessed the project and found there was a 64.7% decrease in fatal collisions and a 12.8% decrease in injury collisions compared to 2010. Compared to the 2006-2010 five-year average, there was a 36.8% decrease in fatal collisions and a 7% decrease in injury collisions.

The Basin Triangle POPS project addresses the Washington State Patrol's strategic goal of making Washington roadways safe for the efficient transit of people and goods.

DESCRIPTION

Scanning

There was a significant increase in fatality and serious injury collisions in the “Basin Triangle” from 2006-2010. Data for fatality and serious injury collisions was compiled for each year from 2006-2009 and showed an increase each year. In April 2010, this POPS project began in an attempt to stop the yearly increase. Despite the opening of the project in 2010, the Basin Autonomous Patrol Area (APA) realized a dramatic increase in serious injury and fatality collisions. What was alarming about this was over a third of the deaths were teenagers.

The Basin APA is made up of relatively small communities—when there is a fatality or serious injury collision, it is publicized and has a great impact on the entire area. Even though the public was aware of the collisions, they continued to increase and more needed to be done to try and educate the public—especially young drivers.

From 2006-2010, the deaths nearly tripled. From June 2010 to the end of the year, it seemed like the Basin troopers were going to a fatality every week, and that is why this area is known by the local troopers as the “Triangle of Death.” Impaired driving, speed, inattentive drivers, and texting or talking on cell phones were the cause of most fatality and serious injury collisions in the project area. Some other factors were roadway structure and weather conditions.

Analysis

A statistical baseline was compiled of the four years prior to opening this project. During this period, the injury collisions decreased from 182 to 118; however, fatalities doubled from 7 in 2006 to 14 in 2009. The information for the statistical baseline was obtained through the Washington State Patrol (WSP) Computer Aided Dispatch system (CAD) and the WSP Collision Records Section.

Analysis of collision data indicated that fatality and serious injury crash causation mirrored what was occurring—that the principal factors involved in these cases were:

- Impaired driving
- Run-off-the-road collisions
- Speeding
- Young drivers
- Occupant restraints
- Driver distraction

On December 20, 2010, stakeholders were invited to attend a meeting at the Ephrata Department of Transportation building. They were asked for their input to help curtail the increasing problem of fatality and serious injury collisions (refer to appendices for a list of stakeholders). Each of these stakeholders played a vital role in the success of this POPS project.

Response

Our goal for this project was to reduce the increasing trend of serious injury and fatality collisions in the Basin APA by at least 4% by December 31, 2011. Our action plan was to use three of the four E's (***Enforcement***, ***Engineering***, and ***Education***) listed in the Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan to reduce the serious injury and fatal collisions within the "Basin Triangle."

- **Enforcement**

At the beginning of 2011, the Central Basin Traffic Safety Task Force scheduled and coordinated 17 emphasis patrol campaigns to be completed by the end of the year. These included 3 Driving Under the Influence (DUI) patrols, 3 speed patrols, 4 child car seat patrols, 5 distracted driving patrols, and 1 prom night emphasis patrol. The dates for each emphasis patrol were carefully selected to be in conjunction with high traffic days throughout the year. The goal of each emphasis was to put extra patrols on the roads in the target area. Moses Lake Police Department, Grant County Sheriff's Office, Ephrata Police Department, Quincy Police Department, and the WSP all provided officers for the specialized emphasis patrols in the target area through 2011.

WSP troopers in the Basin patrol area and surrounding areas worked overtime during special emphasis patrols. In addition, Basin troopers worked saturation patrols during normal duty hours and were encouraged to work within the area of interest, specifically on Friday and Saturday nights, where our data indicated there were more DUI collisions and arrests.

In 2011, Basin troopers increased their total violator contacts by 20%. DUI arrests increased by 3%, speed violators increased by 22%, seat belt violators increased by 27%, and drug arrests increased by 43%.

- **Engineering**

In the ***Engineering*** portion of the action plan, Grant County Roads District improved intersection safety by building up shoulders and installing rumble strips leading up to state routes (the improvements are scheduled to be completed in 2012). Photographs in the appendices depict some of the problem areas.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) installed painted rumble strips at the approach to primary intersections. These rumble strips are painted across the lane of travel and help warn motorists of upcoming stop signs. They have greatly reduced the collisions caused by inattentive drivers failing to see approaching stop signs at intersections.

- **Education**

The Central Basin Traffic Safety Task Force was a key stakeholder for education and enforcement during the course of the project. Erica Simmons is the Grant County Task Force

Coordinator and Target Zero Manager and was in charge of funding all the education events and coordinating the patrol campaigns.

1. Public Safety Announcements

Local radio stations KDRM and KBSN broadcast public service announcements (PSA's) about distracted driving and seat belt use six times a day, seven days a week in the Basin. The announcements aired during high traffic periods. KDRM is one of the most popular radio stations among teenagers and young adults in the Basin. The PSA's are performed by local law enforcement personnel including the WSP, Grant County Sheriff's Office, Ephrata Police Department, Quincy Police Department, and Moses Lake Police Department.

2. Teen Education

Between July 2010-February 2011, Grant County had 4 collisions that resulted in the deaths of 8 teenagers. Alcohol, drugs, and speed were factors in each of the collisions.

Because of this, Sergeant Josh Sainsbury of the Grant County Sheriff's Office and I (WSP Trooper Tim Kron)—as the only two active Drug Recognition Experts in the county—felt that more needed to be done to educate our local youth on the dangers of speed and impaired driving. In February 2011, after two Soap Lake High School teenagers were killed in a DUI collision, we began to brainstorm ideas on how to reach out and educate the youth of Grant County. What we thought was going to be a simple education piece for a couple of schools evolved into a massive project. We ended up compiling data, put together a slide show, and presented it to every high school within Grant County (except for one, due to scheduling conflicts). In all, we completed 26 hour-long presentations to 15 Grant County high schools and spoke to nearly 6,000 people. Prior to the presentations, we coordinated meetings with our supervisors and command staff, the crash victims' families, school administrators, and the local Traffic Safety Task Force coordinator. Our presentations ended up receiving local media attention and a lot of positive feedback from the schools, students, parents, and several local community groups.

The presentations were intended to be a shock and awe reality check for the teenagers and were divided into two parts:

- The first part was an educational piece that consisted of drug and alcohol awareness.
- The second part consisted of graphic photos of local collisions the students were able to relate to.

During the presentations, it did not take long for us to realize that we were having a great impact on the students. While viewing the slides, they were able to identify the areas and roadways where the collisions occurred and, at times, they knew the victims on a first-name basis.

During the education aspect of the presentation, we talked about alcohol and various drugs within the 7 drug categories. We made it a point to talk about prescription medications and marijuana, as they are the most commonly abused drugs amongst teenagers. We emphasized the effects they have on the human body and how drugs and alcohol affect decision-making.

During the second portion of the presentation, we showed graphic photographs of the recent fatality collisions and provided background on each incident. We were very transparent and graphic with our narration, to include our observations as first responders, our interactions with family members and friends of the deceased, and dealing with our own emotions while investigating such horrific collision scenes. In the appendices are pictures of two vehicles used in the presentations. The vehicles were involved in two separate one-car DUI collisions resulting in five fatalities. The white Acura was driven by an unlicensed 15-year-old who had marijuana in his system, and the silver Pontiac was driven by a 17-year-old who was under the influence of alcohol and prescription medications. There were no survivors in either of these vehicles.

3. Community Partnership Against Substance Abuse (CPASA) Event

In addition to all the high school presentations, we also participated in several local community events throughout Grant County. During the annual Grant County CPASA event at Big Bend Community College, we made our presentation and assisted in a mock DUI fatality collision scene with MedStar (Helicopter) and the local police and fire departments. This event educated several hundred attendees on the dangers of substance abuse and impaired driving.

4. Moses Lake Moonlight Parade

Due to the strong message that was portrayed during our presentations, we were asked to participate in the annual Memorial Day Moonlight parade in Moses Lake, which draws thousands of onlookers each year. During this event, we partnered with “Let’s Draw the Line Between Youth and Alcohol” and displayed both crashed cars in the parade. A local business also donated a few educational banners that we attached to the cars.

5. Grant County Fair

The annual Grant County Fair was another event in which we were able to reach out to the community. During this event, we partnered with the Central Basin Traffic Safety Task Force and State Farm Insurance and educated thousands of community members not only on the dangers of impaired driving, but also on the dangers of distracted driving and the importance of proper occupant restraints.

6. \$7,200 State Farm Grant

Due to the success of the education programs within the high schools and throughout the community, we were able to partner with State Farm Insurance and the Central Basin

Traffic Safety Task Force to apply for and receive a \$7,200 grant for youth education. The funds will be used for future youth education programs and events.

- **Challenges**

Throughout the “Basin Triangle” project, the biggest challenge was the amount of funds available for extra patrols. The Washington Traffic Safety Commission was our only source of additional patrol funding, which was used for special emphasis patrols and educational events. Due to limited funding, we were not able to have extra patrols on some of the busy Basin weekends. We are aware that this is a problem throughout our state and not just in the Basin.

Our next challenge was the inability to educate motorists from out of town. Our data showed that about half of the fatalities in 2010 were subjects from outside of Grant County. During the summer months, the Basin is a recreational hot spot. The sunny weather brings people from all around to attend concerts, go fishing, hiking, boating, ride all-terrain vehicles, and to just have a good time.

Some would hear PSA’s on the radio and others would be educated through enforcement as they entered the Basin.

Assessment

Our final assessment of the project showed positive results, as reflected by 2011 collision data:

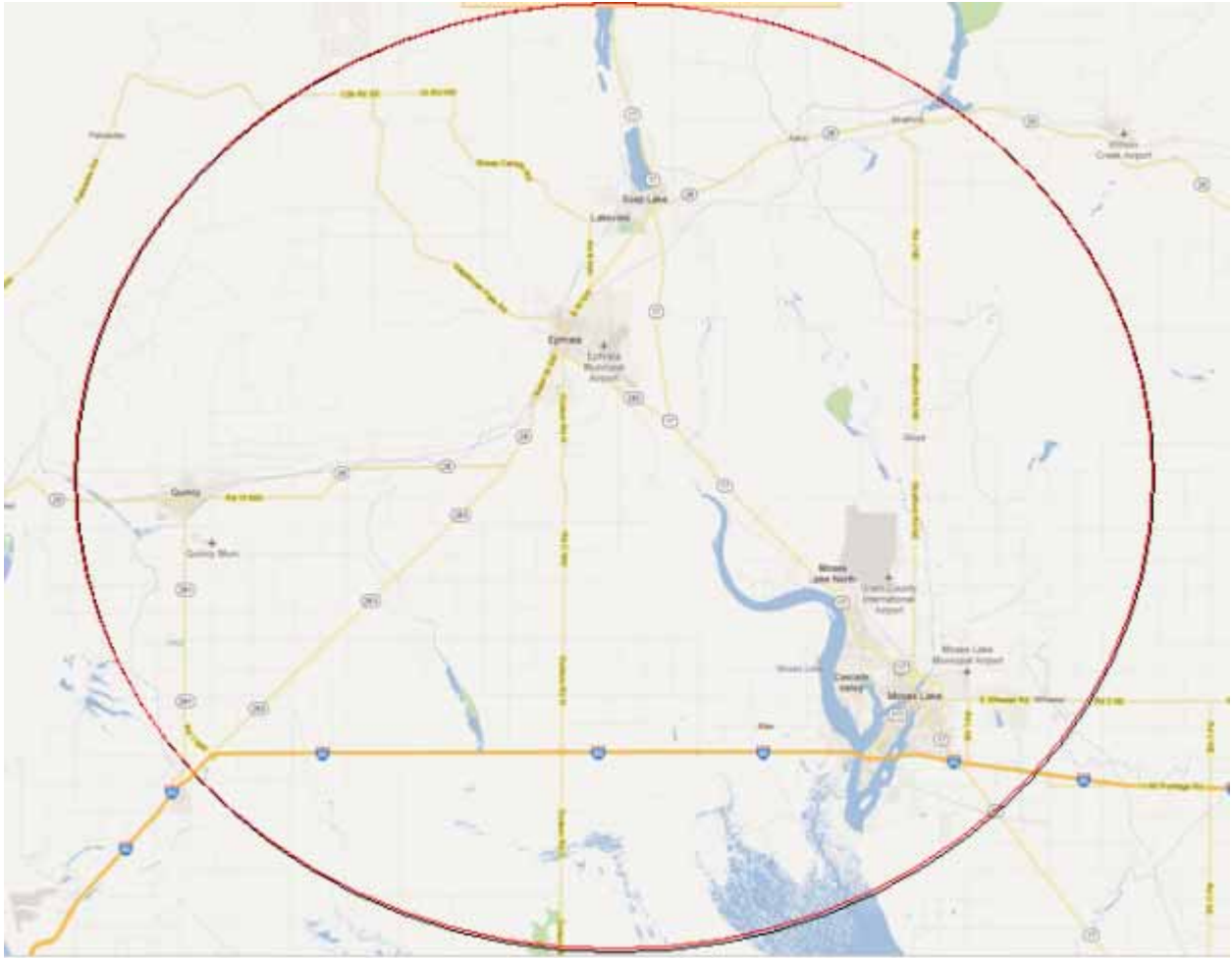
- 6 fatal collisions in 2011, involving 6 deaths, compared to 17 fatal collisions and 21 deaths the previous year. This represents a 64.7% decrease of fatal collisions over the previous year and 36.8% compared to the five-year average.
- The Basin APA has had ZERO teen fatalities since the education element of this project began in February 2011.
- A 12.8% reduction in injury collisions in 2011 compared to the previous year, and a 7% decrease compared to the five-year average.
- 19% fewer collisions investigated (all collisions) compared to 2010.

At the end of 2011, the results of the POPS project showed a very positive impact in the Grant County APA. The results from this project can continue for years to come with the renewed support of the stakeholders and continuing to educate the citizens of Grant County on the dangers of impaired driving.

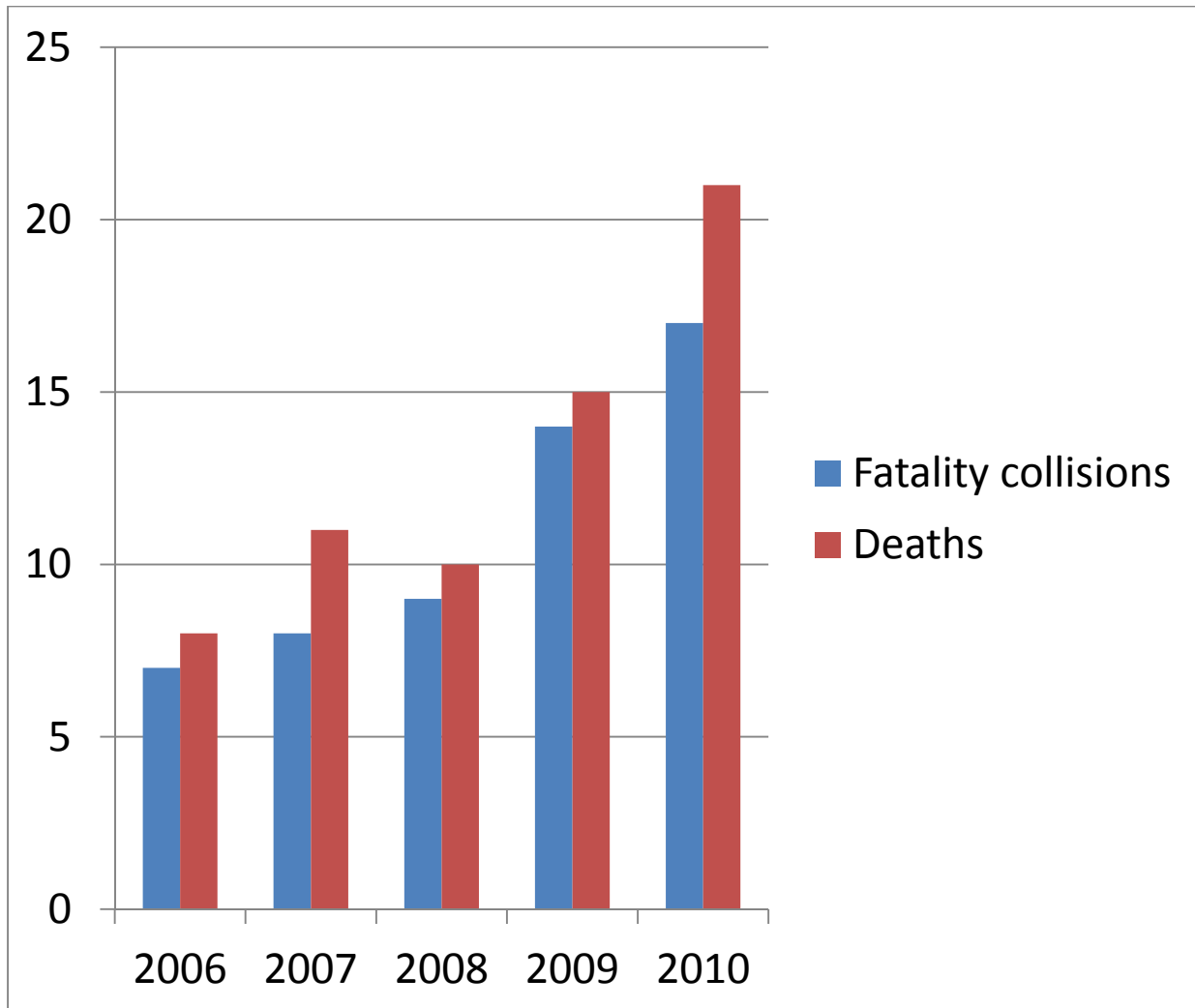
The Basin Triangle POPS project addresses the Washington State Patrol strategic goal #1, making Washington roadways safe for the efficient transit of people and goods.

APPENDICES

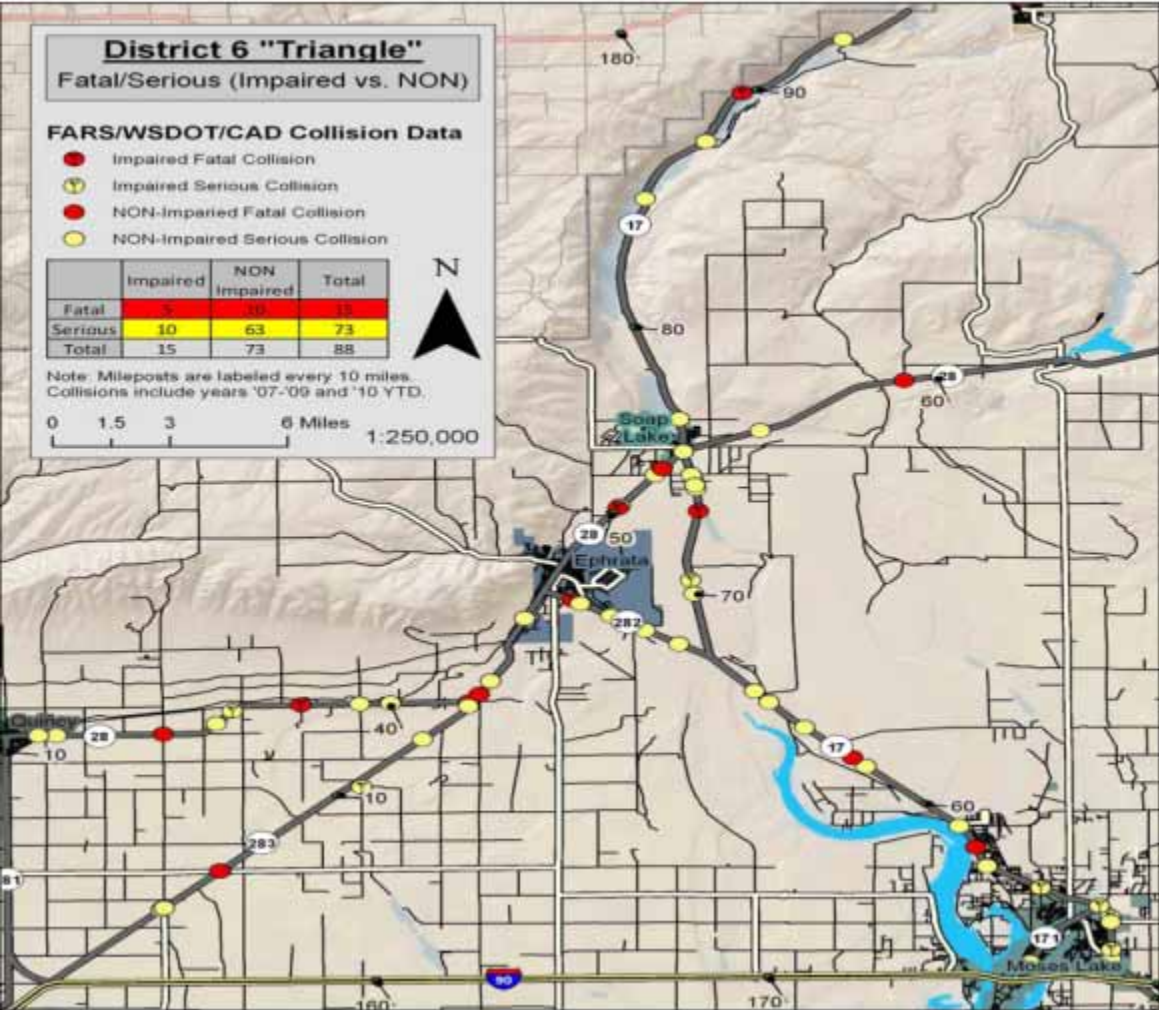
Area of Interest



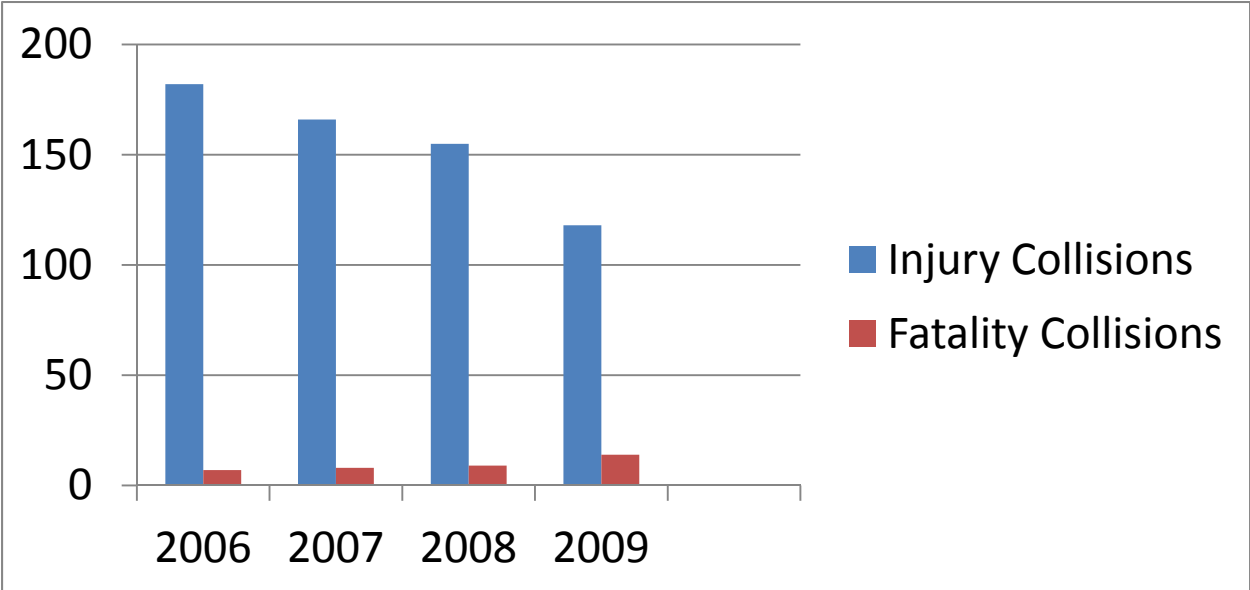
Fatality Collisions and Deaths Basin APA 2006-2010



2007-2010 Fatal/Serious (Impaired vs. NON-Impaired)



Statistical Baseline



Stakeholders

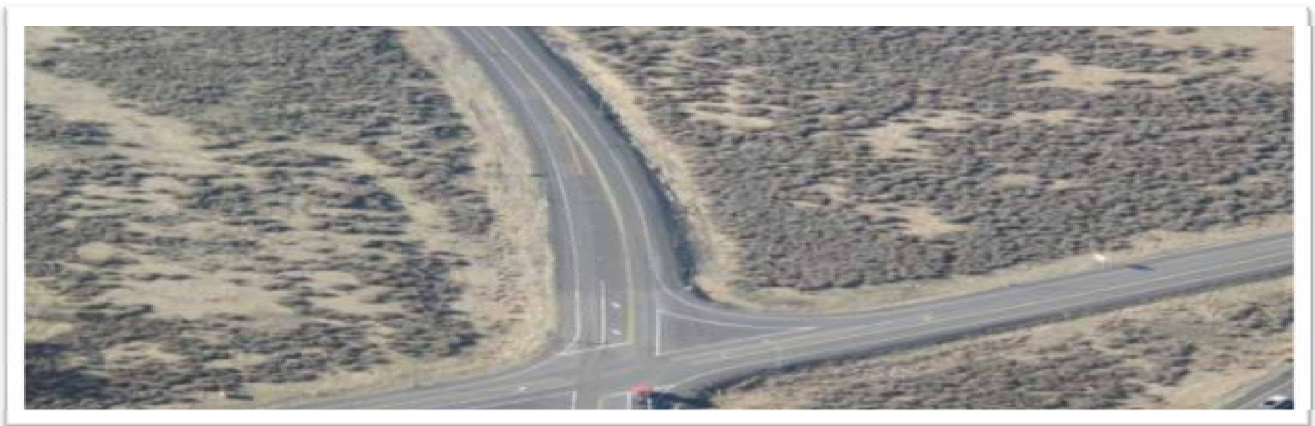
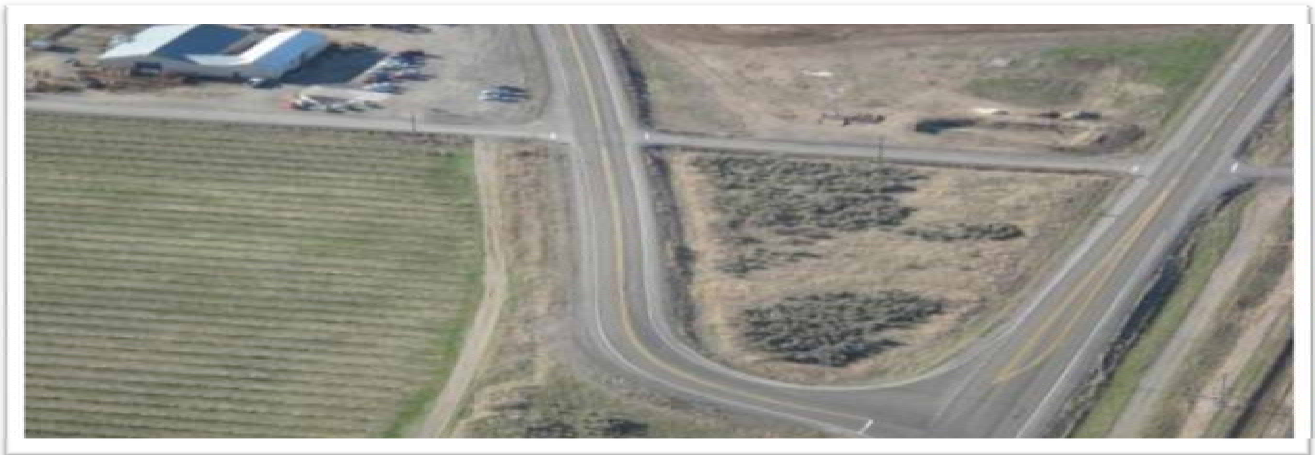
Public Safety	Schools	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington State Patrol • Grant County Sheriff’s Dept. • Moses Lake PD • Ephrata PD • Soap Lake PD • Quincy PD • Warden PD • Othello PD • Adams County Sheriff’s Dept. • Grant County Fire • American Medical Response (AMR) • Central Basin Traffic Safety Task Force (CBTSTF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moses Lake School District • Ephrata School District • Quincy School District • Soap Lake School District • Mattawa School District • Royal City School District • Moses Lake Christian Academy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington State Department of Transportation • Grant County Road District • Grant County Public Works

WSP Proactive Enforcement

	2010	2011	Difference
TOTAL VIOLATOR CONTACTS	19,409	24,374	+ 20%
DUI ARRESTS	344	355	+ 3%
SPEED VIOLATORS	13,168	16,891	+ 22%
SEAT BELT VIOLATORS	1,347	1,848	+ 27%
DRUG ARRESTS	99	174	+ 43%
AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS	1,975	2,005	+ 1%
COLLISIONS INVESTIGATED	633	511	- 19%

Engineering





Education







Assessment

