Collaborative Sciences Center for
ROAD SAFETY

Shaping the narrative around traffic injury:

A media framing guide for transportation and public health professionals

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Summary

Professionals in transportation and public health share a goal of addressing the enduring and tragic issue of injury and death on our roadways. Between 36,000 and 43,000 people have died in traffic crashes in the United States each year since 2016 (U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Safety Administration, 2022) and motor vehicle crashes are among the leading causes of unintentional death and injury in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Further, significant racial disparities exist, with BIPOC individuals making up a disproportionate percentage of road deaths (Governors Highway Safety Association, 2021). Despite this, calls to improve road safety are not particularly widespread. However, news media reporting on traffic injury can influence the way members of the public think about the problem. Working with local journalists presents an opportunity to help reshape how people think about the problem and what solutions they would support.

News media "frames" convey to readers and viewers what is most important in a story. For example, in covering traffic crashes, journalists most often tell us who was involved in a crash and who may have been responsible for the incident. Left unsaid is contextual information, for example, about the roadway and land use, or information about the prevalence, trends, and inequities of roadway injury in a town, city, or state. Professionals who design these environments and know about injury prevention—transportation planners, engineers, and public health professionals—can fill this gap in reporting. Improved media reporting of crashes could lead to an increased awareness of this widespread problem and greater support for effective solutions to address the root causes of road violence.

This guide calls for professionals who work in injury prevention and in the planning and designing of roadways to coordinate with journalists and get proactive about shaping the narrative around traffic injury in our communities. The recommendations in this Guide apply to all occasions in which professionals interact with journalists or communicate with members of the public.

We recommend framing road trauma by using the following four strategies:

1. **Choose your target message** that reinforces the Safe Systems approach.

2. **Appeal to people's concern for others** by highlighting the human toll of such tragic events. Consider coordinating with people affected by road trauma to share their stories.

3. **Provide context** to frame traffic injury as a broader pattern of harm. Speak to the extent of the problem and underlying risk factors for road injury in a geographic area that go beyond individual responsibility. Providing context avoids blaming people involved in a crash and can inspire thinking about prevention.

4. **Inspire pragmatic "can-doism"** by highlighting traffic injury as a problem that the town, city, or state is working to address., Emphasize that such injury is preventable, and that improving the safety of the transportation system benefits everyone.

For examples of language that follows the four steps, refer to the matrix on page 13 of this guide.

Part I: Background

What is "framing" and why does it matter?

Imagine holding up a picture frame over a landscape. As you look through the frame, you notice that some elements of the landscape are bound within the frame, whereas other landscape details lie outside of the frame, reminding us that a picture can never capture an entire place. Like a picture frame, journalists can only present a select amount of information about an event or issue. Choosing certain information and details over others conveys to the audience what is most important, what needs to be addressed, and which solutions might make the most sense (Wakefield, Smith, and Chapman, 2005; Hinchcliff, Poulos, Ivers, and Senserrick, 2011).

Journalists can influence understanding of and opinion on many different political issues, ranging from education and immigration reform, to climate change (Beyet and Matthes, 2015) and foreign policy (Wanta, Golan, and Lee, 2004). For example, Goldstein (2011) revealed that the news media portrayed a disproportionately negative view of teachers' unions' perspectives on the No Child Left Behind Act, which then shaped the public's understanding of the Act and their perceptions of teachers and their unions.

As with other subjects, media framing of traffic crashes guides the audience's attention toward some crash event details over others. For example, details tend to include information about the road users involved in a crash, but not any information about the surrounding environment (e.g., roadway type or speed limit).

Changing this framing has been shown to influence audience opinions about a crash for the better. Goddard, Ralph, Thigpen, and Iacobucci (2019) found that shifting a story's focus from details about pedestrian victims to a focus on the context of the crash, reduced tendencies to blame the pedestrian victim and increased support for improving pedestrian infrastructure.

Putting media coverage of traffic crashes in a Safe Systems context

Safe Systems is an approach to transportation safety that shifts the focus from individual decisions to higher level factors that lead to traffic injury, such as road and vehicle design. This approach considers transportation safety holistically and seeks to create a transportation system that eliminates death and serious injury by getting at the root causes. Several countries have adopted versions of Safe Systems, including Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand. Many other transportation and public health agencies within and outside the United States have applied the principles of this approach. To advance Safe Systems in the U.S., a multidisciplinary research team with the Collaborative Sciences Center for Road Safety (CSCRS), whose mission is to "create and exchange knowledge to advance transportation safety through a multidisciplinary, **systems-based** approach," has identified several core and interconnected principles that underpin Safe Systems. As seen in the box below, the way local news media frame traffic injury plays a critical role in advancing Safe Systems.

Safe Systems principles

Adapting the structure and function of the system to the complexities of human behavior. Design roadways, vehicles, and land uses in ways that consider human social and physical behavior to reduce the likelihood of human mistakes and reduce the consequences of mistakes when they occur.

Manage kinetic energy transfer among road users. Reduce the energy transferred in crashes by designing safer vehicles and roadways. Shift the population to safer, more sustainable methods of travel.

Treat road user safety as the foundation of all system interventions. Road safety must be addressed to have true mobility, access, and equity. Provide choices in mobility while ensuring safety for users no matter which option they choose.

Foster the creation of a shared vision and coordinated action. Work across sectors that influence safety and see traffic injury holistically—*including how news media frames such injury*—to prevent unintended consequences and to recognize the implications of policymaking in other parts of the transportation system.
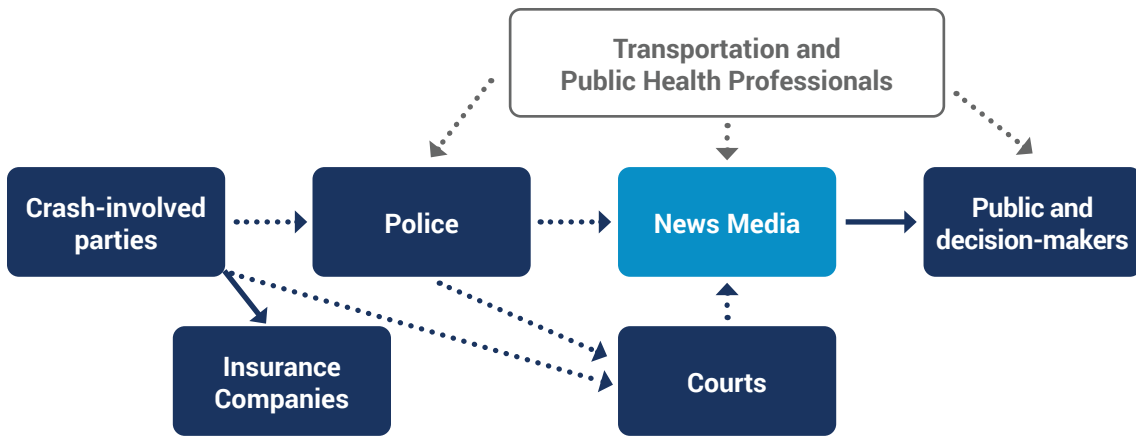
Figure 1. A depiction of the role of news media amidst the interactions that unfold in the aftermath of a crash. (Solid arrows denote interactions that commonly occur; dashed arrows denote interactions that occur less frequently; and grey-outlined white boxes and arrows denote promising though less featured communication channels to present traffic injury as a preventable public health issue).

Who tends to tell the story?

Who is behind media framing of traffic crashes? In our recent examination of 1,156 broadcast TV news articles covering traffic crashes, journalists most often quoted a law enforcement officer or agency (18.4% of all articles), followed by crash witnesses (11.9%) and crash-involved parties (6.1%). Media coverage centered around a law enforcement perspective tended to involve identifying crash-involved parties, detailing circumstances that led to the crash, assigning "fault", and documenting any legal consequences crash-involved parties face. Previous studies have found similar trends in media framing of traffic injury, suggesting that such "villainizing" coverage might contribute to the perceived inevitability of crashes by signaling that bad driving behavior is unavoidable (Smith and Martin, 2007; Classen, Eby, Molnar, Dobbs, and Winter, 2011).

Professionals and stakeholders who can and should get involved

As mentioned, law enforcement, bystanders and witnesses, and crash-involved parties were quoted most often in coverage of traffic crashes. On the other hand, transportation planners and engineers, roadway safety advocates, and public health professionals were quoted in only 1.1, 0.4, and 0.1 percent of the 1,156 covered crash events, respectively.

To help shape public perception of traffic injury as a preventable public health issue, journalists, professionals who work in injury prevention and design of roadways, and community advocates should work together to speak to common traffic injury themes beyond assigning blame and putting all of the responsibility to be safe on individual road users.

Figure 1 displays the current and potential flow of information related to a crash, organized according to levels of knowledge about traffic collisions. As shown in **Figure 1**, members of the public, including decision makers, receive news of traffic crashes from their local news media. Journalists, in turn, receive content for stories about crash events from local police or the court system. Those involved in crashes sometimes engage with police officers and the court system, but nearly always connect with insurance companies. The top tier represents the professional groups that are rarely included in traffic crash narratives, but have influence on the safety of roadways, the prevention of injury, and can speak to how communities are affected by road trauma. In the next section, we will focus on how these professionals' voices and more contextual frames can lead to better understanding of traffic injury, its causes, and possible solutions.

Part II: How can we re-frame the conversation around traffic injury?

Thus far we have explored "who" tends to be featured in media coverage of traffic injury. Now we shift to consider "what" messages and meanings journalists convey. Traffic crashes are commonly framed as isolated events rather than predictable outcomes of our transportation system. Such reporting neglects the broader social and environmental context in which crashes occur (Ralph, Iacobucci, Thigpen, & Goddard, 2019). The idea that traffic injuries and deaths are unavoidable is a common public misconception and the World Health Organization considers traffic deaths a "preventable health epidemic" (World Health Organization, 2009).

In our review of 1,156 TV news articles covering traffic crashes, we found that reporting often left out important crash details that influence the risk and severity of a crash such as roadway characteristics (e.g., the posted speed limit, number of lanes) or consumer trends that favor larger, higher horsepower vehicles (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2016).Framing that focuses on certain aspects of a crash over others also communicate what the audience should view as the important take-away and may appeal to certain values. For example, consider a media story featuring a driver striking and killing a pedestrian who was crossing the street. The story, along with its accompanying headline mention the crash-induced travel delays motorists should expect. This frame conveys to the public that travel delays are important, perhaps even more so than the death of a person. Repeated use of similar frames can undermine the public's concern for victims of traffic injury.

However, journalists can also humanize the people involved in crashes. So-called "human interest" or "victim narratives", which tell stories about crash victims, can provoke strong feelings of empathy toward others among audience members (Valenzuela, Piña, and Ramírez, 2017). This empathy for others emerges from most people's deep concern for the well-being of close family and friends or their "benevolence" values (Doran and Littrell, 2013). When activated—through human-centered media stories, for example—feelings of goodwill for a member of one's "in-group" can enlarge to include members of "out-groups" (Schwartz, 2016), such as strangers involved in traffic crashes.

As displayed in **Figure 2** and **Table 1**, values, that can be evoked through the messages and framing of media stories, range from values concerned with the self or so-called "extrinsic values" (Achievement and Power), to those values that consider others or so-called "intrinsic values" (Self-Direction, Universalism, and Benevolence). **Figure 2** shows how each of the 10 values are arranged in a "circumplex." When activated, values located closer to each other "spill over" into nearby values and also suppress values located on the opposite side of the circumplex.

Figure 2. Universal human values arranged in a circumplex (Common Cause Foundation, 2014).

Table 1. Types and definitions of human values (adapted from Bardi and Schwartz, 2016).

Types of Values	Definition
Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life
Self-Direction	Independent thought and action-choosing, creating, exploring
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection of the welfare of all people and of nature
Benevolence	Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact
Tradition	Respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms
Security	Safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships, and of self

The previous example of a media story that frames a road injury as something that delays motor vehicle traffic appeals to Power values for control over one's time and use of road space. Activating people's values for control (Power) can suppress their concern for the welfare of others (Universalism). On the other hand, the "human interest" or "victim narrative" story appeals to values of Universalism, concern for others. Moreover, a story that encourages readers and viewers to reflect upon their ability to choose to drive at safe speeds (Self-Direction) can "spill over" into caring for people involved in road trauma (Universalism) (see **Figure 2**).

The 4-frame approach

Choose your target message

As mentioned previously, news media cannot communicate every single aspect of a story and a frame will always emerge. Therefore, a frame that reinforces the Safe Systems approach can push audiences to consider more upstream factors that contribute to a crash. See the box to the right for examples of simple messages aligned with a Safe Systems approach.

Appeal to people's concern for others

An "intrinsic" value possesses worth in "in its own right," in contrast to values which derive worth from their relation to something outside of the self (e.g., money, social status) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2002). Even people who attach greater importance to extrinsic values respond to appeals to their intrinsic values by expressing deeper concern over a wide range of "bigger-than-self" problems.
Relevant here is the finding that communicators who engage their audiences' intrinsic values of concern for others (Benevolence and Universalism) were likely to inspire people to express greater concern for "bigger than self" problems (Maio, 2012). These findings place journalists as key communicators in activating the public's intrinsic values of concern for victims of traffic injury.

While infrequent, our review of 1,156 broadcast TV news articles uncovered several that appealed to people's concern for others. For example, a Fox 5 article reporting on a Las Vegas crash in March 2018 highlighted the community tragedy of a nine-year-old boy's death (Yahm, 2018). While riding his bike, a driver struck and killed the boy as the driver was turning through an intersection. A Las Vegas Police Sergeant who was interviewed for the story referred to the boy as a "perfect angel." Additionally, Yahm, the story's author, used "energetic and full of love'" in the article's title to describe the victim. These appeals to "bigger than self" problems, while heartbreaking, can activate people's sense of concern for others and increase public support for addressing social issues (Maio, 2012; Swim and Becker, 2012).

Examples of simple messages aligned with a Safe Systems approach

- Crashes are preventable
- Speed (not just speeding) is an important factor in the risk of injury/fatality in a crash
- Humans make mistakes and the consequence of those mistakes should not be death
- Protecting human life is the top priority
- Humans are vulnerable to the energy transmitted in crashes
- Separating vulnerable road users from fast, large vehicles in space (e.g., protected bike lanes) and time (e.g., leading pedestrian intervals) saves lives
- Providing safer, more sustainable options for modes of transportation is key
- Vehicles can be designed in ways that make them safer (e.g., size, weight, visibility, braking systems) for everyone

Provide context

Together with humanizing the victims of crashes and appealing to people's concern for others, is placing crash events into broader context. Centering crashes in a larger narrative about road injury is often called "thematic framing," and is used in contrast with "episodic framing", which treats traffic crashes as isolated incidents unrelated to other crashes (Ting, 2017).

In a story by WCNC Charlotte of a May 2019 vehicle-pedestrian crash that resulted in a nine-year old boy's death, the journalist featured the perspective of the boy's older sister who heard and saw her younger brother lying on the ground immediately after the driver struck him with her truck (Alworth, 2019). Alworth, the story's author, informs the audience that the driver had failed to stop at a stop sign, and then interviews neighbors who share how they had recently witnessed other crashes at the same intersection. This framing places the event in context, indicating a problem with the intersection (the environment) and conveying to the audience that the victim was part of a larger community.

Thematic frames like these can lead audiences to question their assumptions about the causes of road injury, that often place responsibility solely on individuals, while neglecting the larger context and network of factors that interact to contribute to traffic injury. For example, while a driver's choice to speed contributes to speed-related traffic injury, high traffic speeds are also strongly influenced by the road design, driving context, and drivers' life circumstances (Kumfer, LaJeunesse, Sandt, and Thomas, 2019; Ivan, Ravishanker, Jackson, Aronov, and Guo, 2012).

This is often worsened by the tendency of law enforcement and journalists to consistently blame pedestrians for the crash-related injuries that befall them, whether explicitly or not. For example, by commonly citing their dark clothing or crossing outside of marked crosswalks as though the pedestrian's choice in clothing and behaviors were the causes of crashes. Furthermore, since pedestrians are more likely to die or be seriously injured in a crash and are thus unable to provide their account of events, stories may bias the surviving and often uninjured drivers, who are unlikely to admit that they were speeding or distracted while driving. Finally, focusing on victims' and drivers' behaviors can obscure the responsibility of policymakers to provide a safe transportation system (Job, 2020). With context-based, thematic frames, however, crash reports can appeal to people's intrinsic care for others by telling the story of a crash from a wider perspective.

Inspire pragmatic "can-doism"

Placing traffic injury into a broader context can also inspire others to call for action.

Consider a crash-related story that took place in San Jose, CA in August 2019. The story informs ABC 7 viewers that an SUV driver struck and killed a 44-year old man who was in a crosswalk with his bicycle (Hassan, 2019). Hassan, the story's author, features a gas station employee who heard the crash, lamented the loss of the victim, and claimed that drivers regularly ran red lights at

Planning for Vision Zero

Vision Zero—an initiative to eliminate serious and fatal traffic crashes—has seen promising results in other countries. Based on these results, several U.S. cities began implementing Vision Zero as early as 2014. In establishing Vision Zero programs, a growing community of U.S. municipalities are developing Vision Zero plans. A Vision Zero plan is a public document that provides the vision for future efforts to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries. Creating a Vision Zero plan requires advanced planning, collaboration, and community engagement. It also requires an understanding of the serious crashes and risks in the community. To access a Collaborative Sciences Center for Road Safety-produced "Guide to Developing a Vision Zero Plan", visit: **https://www.roadsafety.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CSCRS_VZGuide_FINAL.pdf**

the 6 x 4 lane intersection. Then, in "can-do" fashion, the story pivots to a San Jose city council member's report about the city's "Vision Zero" program, an initiative to eliminate serious and fatal traffic crashes throughout the city. This council member conveys the sense that "we can do this" and describes how San Jose is working on lowering speeds by narrowing vehicle lanes, providing drivers feedback on their speed using electronic signs, and adding and expanding bike lanes to create buffers between drivers and bicyclists (see **Planning for Vision Zero**).

Too often, traffic injury is framed as unavoidable, even a necessary cost of a functioning society. By framing serious crashes as preventable through use of common-sense measures (e.g., slowing travel speeds, separating people inside and outside of motor vehicles), we can tap into an American sense of "can do" action (Thompson, 2016).

Part III: Pulling it all together

Media frames shape the public's opinions about whether traffic injury is an important problem, who and what might be responsible for these injuries, and what can or should be done to prevent them in the future.

Transportation planners and engineers have knowledge that can connect crash trends and show how one crash is related to others within a municipality, region, or state. Similarly, public health officials are concerned with the health and wellbeing of people who suffer from crash-induced injuries at a population level. These professionals have know quite a lot about the ways in which the physical environment and policies influence road user safety, injury outcomes, and knowledge about ways to most effectively prevent road injuries and fatalities. Yet, as we have seen in our analysis of TV news coverage of traffic crashes, transportation and public health professionals are featured in fewer than 1 in 100 stories. This presents a glaring omission in the U.S. traffic injury narrative.

To create a new, empowering narrative around traffic injury in the U.S., let's work together to use the following 4-frame approach:

1. Choose a target message that reinforces the Safe Systems approach.

2. Appeal to people's concern for others.

3. Provide context.

4. Inspire pragmatic "can-doism".

Planning to engage the news media and the public

Build relationships with local media

Transportation and public health officials already have a lot on their plates. However, a good communication strategy will help build support and generate new resources to invest in strategies to address road safety by building public support for efforts. As has already been said, these professionals hold unique and valuable perspective on the problem and solutions to road injuries and deaths.

Many professionals are working within governmental agencies (e.g., transportation or public health departments). Therefore, a first step is to initiate a conversation with your communications team and/or a

Public Information Officer (PIO). Let them know that you are willing to provide statements and interviews about road injuries and ongoing road safety projects.

Reaching out to journalists yourself to pitch stories about upcoming events and transportation-related projects is another way to establish yourself as a resource. Keep in mind that journalists reporting crashes cover a lot of topics and have a higher rate of turnover. Reaching them may require more coordination or training with PIOs and law enforcement, since they will likely be the first points of contact. For relationship-building, you can focus on journalists that cover your region or who do more in-depth reporting.

Be proactive

1. **Be a resource.** Work with your public information officer, communications team, or journalists directly to let them know about your willingness to speak on the issue of traffic injury.

2. **Create your own content.** Anticipate events (e.g., the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims), large infrastructure projects, holiday travel, etc. to share information with the public. Pitch stories to local news outlets, write press releases, use social media, or even record a video statement.* See the box on page 12 for examples of opportunities to engage with media.

3. **Develop a plan.** Add a communications agenda item to your regularly scheduled meetings. Identify any relevant messages your team would like to communicate to the public and decide what to do and who is responsible. Have a set procedure, so the right person knows who to contact and what to say right after an event.

Tip: Some local departments (e.g. police departments) have active Twitter accounts. Consider retweeting stories with added context using the 4-frame approach.

Communication tips

- **Keep it simple.** Decide what your central message should be that you want the public to understand and care about. Ideally, this message will align with one of the principles of the Safe Systems approach (See page 9 for examples of Safe Systems messages).

- **Acknowledge that you may not be able to speak to the specifics of a particular crash.** Your perceptive is on the "big picture." You are probably most familiar with what the local problem areas are, factors that make crashes more likely to happen or more severe, strategies to prevent serious crashes, etc. Speak to these broader patterns of traffic injury in your community.

- **Confront bias, when possible.** Previously, this Guide noted subtle ways that journalists, law enforcement, and others sometimes blame crash victims—even without meaning to. Address this directly by noting factors that are more important than individual choices or attributes of the victim (e.g., lighting and crosswalks instead of a pedestrian's dark clothing).

  Try: The lighting at that crosswalk may need attention. Regardless of what someone is wearing, we have to make sure that drivers can see people walking who need to cross the street.

- **Check yourself to avoid being defensive.** Traffic injury is a complex problem and it will take everyone working together to create meaningful change. First, practice active listening—acknowledge the concerns residents raise and assume best intentions. Then, you can point to the need and current efforts for a coordinated "all hands" approach.

  Instead of: Well, it would be great if we could put a crosswalk there, but…

  Try: I understand that the community is concerned about the safety of that intersection, and wants to feel safe walking/biking there. One thing we are working on is…We need the community to…

When to engage with media to reframe crash reporting

- **In preparation for the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.** This international event takes place on the third Sunday in November every year and through demonstrations about the societal impact of road deaths and injuries, it draws public attention to traffic safety.

- **In anticipation of travel-heavy times of year.** This might bring to mind images of young people in the streets (e.g., Halloween, first day of school after summer break, Walk to School Day in October and Bike to School Day in May, first day of University classes) and of unusually high amounts of travel (e.g., Thanksgiving and Winter holiday travel, Spring Break, Summer travel season). Just prior to each of these events and seasons, transportation and public health professionals could promote safe, sensible, and sustainable travel (walking, biking, riding transit) in ways that motivates people and leverages the reach of local journalists.

- **Before, during, and after major transportation and public health projects or programs.** Communicating about planned changes to the city's or town's transportation system (e.g., major corridor retrofits, citywide traffic calming, injury prevention programs, Vision Zero planning) can convey to the public that the town, city, or state is working to address this problem, and that improving road user safety benefits everyone. These communications can also help inform residents and policymakers about the safety effectiveness of more novel approaches, such as installing roundabouts, implementing automated speed enforcement, or instituting land use policies that reduce the need for people to drive long distances to get where they need and want to go.

- **In response to media reported road injuries.** As Ralph and colleagues (2019) recommend, professionals should make themselves available to journalists and consider preparing a statement on reported crashes. As discussed throughout this Guide, the statement should appeal to intrinsic values of caring for others, depict themes related to crashes in the area, and inspire can-do attitudes among the public.

Example language for reframing the message

Target/ key message reinforcing Safe Systems approach	Appeal to people's concern for others	Provide context	Inspire "can-doism"
(What are contextual contributors to serious injury crashes the public should know about? What are some current projects underway?)	*(Who was involved? Who else will be affected and how?)*	*(What are the roadway characteristics that could have contributed to this crash? What trends are there in this area/ similar areas?)*	*(What plans/initiatives/projects are underway to address road safety? Who has the authority to make the necessary changes and what can the public do to support change?)*
Risk of speed	I can't imagine what their family is going through. This loss is a tragedy that impacts the family and friends tremendously, but it also affects our entire community.	Even if a driver is not exceeding the speed limit, vehicle speed is almost always a factor determining whether victims of a crash survive. The speed limit on that roadway is 45mph, which may be too fast, given all the people moving around that area who live there, shop there, etc.	We have been working with the [state/county] to lower speeds on that road and other similar roadways across the town. Residents concerned about the speed of that road can and should voice their concerns.
Injuries from crashes are preventable	I and my department were saddened to learn of the crash that occurred at [date] and [location]. Our thoughts go out to the family and friends of the [name of person(s)] who was/were killed/ harmed in the crash.	We wish this were an isolated incident, but the truth is, this crash is one among many that devastates the lives of thousands of people in the U.S. each year. It is clear from this crash and many others, that our country, state, and city need to do more to prevent serious crashes like these.	Know that in [municipality], we are working with [partnering agencies] to re-design our roads and introduce better policies to make our streets safer for everyone. [Provide project/program/policy examples, if available]. Please feel welcome to get in touch with me and our elected officials to discuss your concerns about safety on our roads.
Separating/ protecting vulnerable road users	I was so saddened to hear about the tragic loss of a member or our community. My family loves to ride bikes in that area of town and it's scary to think that this could happen to anyone.	People often focus on whether people on bikes involved in crashes were wearing helmets. However, depending on the type of crash, helmets may or may not protect riders when they are hit by a vehicle. The best protection for people walking or rolling, where feasible, is to keep them physically separated from vehicles with protected bike lanes and sidewalks.	This is why we have proposed to include [insert project] as a part of our [insert plan]. These are preventable deaths and we need to protect everyone in the community no matter how they get around.

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Appendix

Reframing crash reporting in news media

Transportation and public health professionals have an important role to play in building public support for addressing road injuries and deaths as a preventable public health crisis. Use the following strategies to change the narrative:

How to reframe the message

1. Choose your target message that reinforces the Safe Systems approach (e.g., risk of speed, separating users in space and time, vehicle design).

2. Appeal to people's concern for others by highlighting the human toll of such tragic events. Acknowledge the harms caused to loved ones and the larger community.

3. Provide context to frame traffic injury as a broader pattern of harm. Speak to the extent of the problem and risk factors that go beyond individual responsibility.

4. Inspire "can-doism" by emphasizing that the problem is something that can be addressed, is preventable, and would benefit everyone. Highlight any local efforts to prevent serious crashes.

How to engage with news media and the public

Be a resource. Notify your communications team or local journalists that you're willing to speak on traffic injury.

Create your own content. Anticipate events, large projects, holiday travel, etc. to share info with the public. Pitch stories, write press releases, and use social media to build support for addressing the problem.

Make a plan. Add a communications agenda item to regular meetings. Identify relevant messages and have a procedure for what will be done and who will be responsible.

For the full media framing guide for transportation and public health professionals, visit **www.roadsafety.unc.edu/research/projects/2019r29/**

Collaborative Sciences Center for ROAD SAFETY

Appendix

Resources

Arthur W. Page Center for Integrity in Public Communication

A research center at Penn State University dedicated to the study and advancement of ethics and responsibility in corporate communication and other forms of public communication.

Cause Communications

A team of communications strategists who use communications to help drive positive social change. They work across sectors and silos to advance equal rights, greater opportunity, and better health in communities.

Common Cause Foundation

A UK-based team working, amidst a large and growing international network, to strengthen and give voice to the compassionate values that underpin social and environmental concern.

Frameworks Institute

A think tank that helps mission-driven organizations communicate about social issues in ways that build public will to support progressive change.

New Media Advocacy

A team of narrative strategists working at the intersection of communications, movement building, and cultural engagement.

Safe States

An alliance to strengthen the practice of injury and violence prevention. One focus area is on Policy Tools and Materials.

UNC's Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media

Supports existing and start-up news organizations through its dissemination of applied research and the development of digital tools and solutions.

Working Narratives

A non-partisan social justice organization dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering communities to address issues that affect their lives.

World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims

Started by the British road crash victim charity, Road Peace, in 1993 and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005, this international event takes place on the third Sunday in November every year to demonstrate the enormous scale and impact of road deaths and injuries.

Appendix

Keyword glossary

Episodic vs. Thematic frame

Where an episodic frame would focus on an individual, a thematic frame would focus on the issue. An episodic frame focuses on a single event; a thematic frame focuses on trends over time (Frameworks Institute, 2017).

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic values

Values are stable psychological factors that inform the development and pursuit of life goals, which organize and direct behavior over extended periods of time. Where intrinsic values are more inherently rewarding, extrinsic values are centered on external approval or rewards (Common Cause Foundation, 2014).

Message frame

Defines the packaging of a piece of rhetoric in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others.

Pragmatism

A practical, commonsensical approach to addressing problems or issues.

Safe Systems

A systems-based (or holistic) strategy which recognizes that crashes, injuries, and deaths ultimately result from a larger system of interacting factors. Implementing a Safe Systems approach means that there is a focus to actively understand the "whole" and to strategically intervene between interconnected factors in a way that optimizes safety. Taking a Safe Systems approach is to: 1) design for the humans in the system; 2) recognize the importance of speed and energy transfer in safety; 3) employ proactive tools to manage risks across an entire roadway network or population; and 4) foster integrated, collaborative, and coordinated action.

Victim narrative

A form of storytelling that focuses on the life of the victim of a crime or incident.

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