

Evening Chaupal on Road Safety



at Khandel Village, Block Sambhar, Jaipur

May 15, 2019

Background

Road crashes are unforeseen and unfortunate incidents that leave heart wrenching traces, which are painful to describe. Loss of bread earner in a road crash puts the entire family into boundless trauma. A crash not only affects the family of the victim but it also cause huge losses to our nation's economy. According to estimates road crashes are responsible for 3 to 4 per cent loss of GDP in India. Road Safety awareness at mass level, corporate initiatives towards road safety and coordinated efforts of stakeholders and non-governmental organisations have brought a sigh of relief. The trend of fatalities in Rajasthan is declining since year 2015 but the reduction in terms of fatalities is not satisfactory.



Constitution of the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety in India has brought momentum in initiatives being taken by state governments including Rajasthan. As a result, stakeholder departments have started working in close coordination to mitigate the issue. The unanimous coordinated efforts and collaborative approach is the only key ingredient that can bring the desired results. In addition of adopting multispectral approach it is much desirable to review the decades old rules, regulations and policies, etc. The time has changed and road safety scenario has also changed in the past 30 years. Plexus of high speed, multilane road network has spread and vehicle technology has seen revolutionary technological breakthrough. Hence, it becomes desirable to review and suggest amendments needed in the act, formation of new policies to bridge this gap.

Considering the severity of the issue CUTS International in collaboration with Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had organised an Evening Chaupal on Road Safety at Khandel Village, Sambhar Block, Jaipur on May 15, 2019. For addressing the five key risk areas viz. wearing helmet, wearing seatbelts and child restraint system, speeding, drunken driving and distracted driving. Importantly the advocated amendments and changes in rules shall necessarily focus on the five risk areas to make them stronger and enforceable. In the evening chaupal more than 250 villagers participated actively.

Proceedings



Atma Ram, ATMA Organisation welcomed all the guests and participants and set the context of the workshop. Then he invited Madhu Sudan Sharma from CUTS International to deliberate his address on the five key risk factors on Road Safety and how these five risk factors are contributing to the death of ordinary road users.

Madhu Sudan Sharma, Senior Programme Officer, CUTS International in his opening remarks explained the importance of Road Safety and recent developments made under its laws wherein he stated that in the past decade, over 13 lakh people have been killed due to road crashes in India. In 2017 alone, 1.47 lakh were killed and close to 5 lakh were seriously injured. In the absence of an efficient Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system in India, the role of bystanders is crucial in saving the lives of victims in road crashes. As per the Law Commission of India, 50 per cent of those killed in road crashes could have been saved if rapid assistance was rendered to them. In India, more than 1.5 lakh people, mostly youths, lose their valuable and productive life in road accidents every year. It is sad to note that the majority of road accident victims are youths and children. This alarming trend is growing day by day. The main reasons of these accidents are five, which are Over Speed, Drink and Drive, Not Wearing Helmet and Seat Belt and Non-compliance of the Traffic Rules. It is a proven fact that if youths are educated properly about the road safety, their precious lives can be saved annually. Also he explained the concept of child restraint system adopted by foreign countries for child safety, which must be adopted by India.



Shweta Bhardwaj, Manager Traffic, CBS, Rajasthan Roadways, Jaipur: She talked briefly about the challenges of road safety and linked it with the civic sense, family education and how family can play an essential role in reducing the road crashes. She said there are certain rules that have been formulated for the benefit of people and the idea of preparing these rules is not that they should be understood by the drivers alone, but also cyclist, pedestrians and other people should also understand it. It is essential to follow



all the rules and regulations. Then she further spoke about the five key risk factors: Over speeding, Compulsory Helmet Wearing, Seat Belt, Child Restraint System, Drink and Drive, which she said are the major reasons behind any accident.



Dhaar Singh, Duty officer, Rajasthan Roadways: He started by saying, “It’s better to be safe than sorry”. However, we tend to forget all this and become careless at times so much so that we risk our lives and put it in danger. Accidents from vehicles have become a big reason behind increased death rates in our country despite government’s implementation of road safety measures. He said everyone, especially pedestrians must remain vigilant while walking on the road and must adhere to safety rules. It is a pedestrian who is mainly responsible for the accident as it is only when he/she walks carelessly not paying any heed to the traffic signal or do not walk on the designated crosswalk that fatal cases of injuries occur. He urged the participants to remain watchful and never be in a hurry while being on the road. Besides, many people are often seen disrupting the usual flow of traffic, which can also prove very dangerous to one’s lives and therefore, should be strictly avoided. Never ignore stop signs as when people do that serious road accidents occur. While concluding he said remember that life doesn’t have a reset button, so do not to be careless on the road.

Prakash Singh Rathore, Assistant Sub Inspector, Sambhar: While addressing the participants he said driving a vehicle beyond the prescribed limit is what causes most accidents on the road. Some drivers or owners themselves drive recklessly and flout traffic rules without any fear of punishment. Besides, people who are drivers by profession and drive throughout day and night sometimes fail to remain attentive and cause accidents. However, now that our government has enforced strict road safety rules and a hefty fine, especially on the drink and drive cases, the incidents of road rage have significantly come down. Talking about the youngsters, he said they drive very irresponsibly and consider road as their racing track, which again results in fatal road accidents. It becomes the responsibility of parents to keep a watch over them and make them realise the importance of safety rules. Sometimes, the vehicle is faulty; may be it has remained out of service for months and its brake or clutch do not work and leads to major road accidents. On the top of this, uneven road surfaces and potholes contribute to the poor road conditions and increase the graph of road accidents.



Mahadev Prasad Kumawat, Former Sarpanch, Khandel, Sambhar: While addressing the participants he said there could be many reasons for road accidents. Negligence or recklessness of the driver or any other person is the main cause of road accidents. People do not follow the traffic instructions and rules properly and hence it leads to severe injuries and deaths. Less or no use of seat belts and

helmets also contribute to such cases. In India, the cases of road accidents are three times higher than many developed nations of the world. So the only way to curb death rates caused due to road accidents is to sincerely follow safety regulations while driving or while being on foot for that matter. Those who are driving should not exceed their speed limit so that if the need arises, the vehicle can be stopped for the passerby or seeing something coming on your way.

Dr. Ram Prakash, Government Ayurved Hospital, Khandel: He said Good Samaritan Guidelines are extremely important, which need to be followed by all. He emphasised on the fact that only people's initiative can help the effective implementation of good Samaritans guidelines in the country. He further said only civic engagement can make the system accountable, transparent and action oriented. He also touched upon the loophole in the implementation of the guidelines by the system, which needs to be plugged so that precious lives can be saved in road accidents. He said earlier people used to avoid bringing accident victims to the hospital because they feared the legal proceeding and the harassment by the police. He briefed about "Golden Period"-- it is the period of time following a traumatic injury, during which there is the highest likelihood that prompt medical and surgical treatment will prevent death. He suggested that people working on Highway Dhabaas should be trained, so that they can provide help to accident victims.



Devender Singh, RTO, Office, Duddu: While addressing he said the rules and regulations made must be followed during driving. He mentioned about the five key risk factors, which must be taken into consideration so as to avoid maximum accidents. He further explained that nowadays police is also changing and becoming more and more transparent and accountable to the masses but if there is any scope of improvement that can be communicated and implemented accordingly. Further he informed the participants about the road accidents, which took place within that week, in which there were casualties. He said those accidents were the result of the negligence of the riders as they were not following the traffic rules. Concluding his speech he urged the public to follow the traffic rules to avoid the accidents and also to live a safe life for themselves and their families.

Paramveer Singh, RTO Office, Duddu: He had actively participated and shared his experiences with the students. He had also urged them to follow traffic rules for their own safety. While urging the students to follow the traffic rules, he had asked them to even educate others because change comes from within. He also explained the 5 E's that are Engineering of Road Safety, Engineering of Vehicles, Engineering of Environment, Engineering of Education and Engineering of Enforcement. According to him drunken driving is a major cause of



accidents. It should be made punishable and strict legislation should be made and enforced in this regard.



Ram Lal Kaswa, Sarpanch, Khandel: He appealed to the villagers to follow the traffic rules and try to articulate these habits in their behaviour, so that transformation takes place. According to him drunken driving is a major cause of accidents. It should be made punishable and strict legislation should be made and enforced in this regard. Impact of Supreme Court's decision on banning of liquor shops near highways had strong influence on bringing down accidents. Sale of liquor has dropped and accident also came down. This has to be properly analysed and the road safety policy should consider these aspects also. Stringent punishment should be given to drunken drivers by cancelling the driving licence on repeated disobeying.

Activities conducted in Evening Chaupal

Two street plays on road safety, which were named as 'Bado ki Bhool' based on Good Samaritan Guidelines and 'Rakshas Model' were organised by artists of Alsana Rang Theatre Society, Jaipur based on the five key risk factors and through this play they explained to the villagers about Good Samaritan as a person who, in good faith, without expectation of payment or reward and without any duty of care or special relationship, voluntarily comes forward to administer immediate assistance or emergency care to a person injured in an accident, or crash, or emergency medical condition, or emergency situation. The role of the bystander is critical in providing emergency care to the victim. Yet, in India, bystanders have been hesitant to help the injured for fear of legal repercussions and procedural hassles. On March 30, 2016, the Supreme Court of India gave "force of law" to the guidelines for the protection of Good Samaritans issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.



They explained the purpose of a Good Samaritan law, which is to provide legal protection to bystanders who come to the aid and rescue of victims of road crashes. The Good Samaritan will be treated respectfully and without any discrimination on the grounds of gender, religion, nationality and caste. Any individual, except an eyewitness, who calls the police to inform them of an accidental injury or death need not reveal his or her personal details such as full name, address or phone number. The police will not compel the Good Samaritan to disclose his or her name, identity, address and other such details in the police record form or log register. The police will not force any Good Samaritan in procuring information or anything else. The police will allow the Good Samaritan to leave after having provided the information available to him or her, and no further questions will be asked of him or her if he or she does not desire to be a witness.

The second Street Play was 'Rakshas Model' based on the five key risk factors. Through this play they explained the main contributing factors to road accidents. It highlighted factors such as inexperience, lack of skill, and risk-taking behaviours, which have been



associated with the accidents caused by the young drivers. They also informed villagers about the five key risk factors: over-speed and rash driving; helmet wearing; seatbelt wearing; child restraint system and drunken driving. They urged the participants through the

drama to follow the traffic rules, which can save life.

A signature campaign was also organised, in which more than 250 villagers signed the petition that they will abide by the traffic rules. Resource material containing rules and regulation on Road Safety was distributed.



Vote of Thanks



Radhika Khandelwal thanked the participants for giving their valuable time for such a great cause and ended the session by urging all the participants including the villagers to follow the traffic rules and create awareness in the society so that effective implementation of traffic rules can take place.