

**From:** Matthew C. Flournoy

**Subject:** Motor Vehicle Crashes are not Accidents, US DOT/NHTSA Proclamation: To eliminate the word "accident" from the realm of unintentional injury,...

Dear Lindsey Field, reporter for the Marietta Daily Journal Newspaper,

Thank you for your article called "Police Sgt. Returns to full duty two years after wrong-way crash" in the MDJ on 9-4-12. Your work is important.

In the article you used the word Crash and not Accident.  
Keep up the excellent work.

Want to share with you this article called **"Crashes Aren't Accidents"** from the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (US DOT/NHTSA).  
Word usage is very important.

Please read the following short US DOT/NHTSA article for the logic behind this important word distinction and usage:

### **"Crashes Aren't Accidents" Campaign**

by Pamela Anikeeff, Traffic Safety Programs

On June 8 [1997], at the opening of the Lifesavers/15 Conference in Orlando, Florida, Administrator Ricardo Martinez, M.D., with Secretary Rodney Slater kicked off the new nationwide campaign "Crashes Aren't Accidents". **The Campaign was initiated by Administrator Martinez to encourage removal of the word "accident" from our vocabulary.** The campaign kickoff featured a poster sized Proclamation (see box) announcing the **"Crashes Aren't Accidents"** campaign which was

signed by the Administrator as part of the ceremony. In a short time, numerous organizations representing thousands of supporters joined the Administrator and literally "signed onto" the Proclamation as well.

## A Crash Is Not an Accident

Changing the way we think about events, and the words we use to describe them, affects the way we behave. Motor vehicle crashes and injuries are predictable, preventable events. **Continued use of the word "accident" promotes the concept that these events are outside of human influence or control. In fact, they are predictable results of specific actions.**

Since we can identify the causes of crashes, we can take action to alter the effect, and avoid collisions. These events are **not "acts of God"** but **predictable results of the laws of physics.**

The concept of "accident" works against bringing all the appropriate resources to bear on the enormous problem of motor vehicle collisions. **Continuous use of "accident" fosters the idea that the resulting injuries are an un-avoidable part of life.**

**"Crash", "collision", "incident", and "injury"** are more appropriate terms, and should be encouraged as substitutes for the word "accident".

**Within the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (US DOT/NHTSA), the word "accident" will no longer be used in materials published and distributed by the agency.** In addition, NHTSA is no longer using "accidents" in speeches or other public remarks, in communications with the news media, individuals or groups in the public or private sector.

Recently, two other U.S. Department of Transportation agencies, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) joined NHTSA Administrator, Dr.

Ricardo Martinez, **endorsing his goal to eliminate "accident" from the agencies' vocabulary.** In this manner, attention will be focused on causes of crashes, and what can be done to prevent collisions and the resulting injuries.

Campaign materials include three specific items: 1) a four page booklet which contains a letter from Administrator Martinez concerning the campaign, a copy of the Proclamation announcing the campaign, a sample article for newsletters, and a page of the "Crashes Aren't Accidents" logo in various sizes ready for use; 2) a brochure which lists 15 proven ways to prevent crashes and avoid injuries; 3) Stickers with the "Crashes Aren't Accidents" logo. These three items are available from the Office of Communications and Outreach, Marketing and Media Division. Additional materials for conference exhibits include: Plastic carrying bags, red plastic paper clips, and lapel pins with the "Crashes Aren't Accidents" logo.

## PROCLAMATION

Whereas, changing the way we think about events and the words we use will affect the way we behave. Our goal is to eliminate the word "accident" from the realm of unintentional injury, on the highway and across the nation;

Whereas, motor vehicle crashes and injuries are predictable, preventable events. Continued use of the word "accident" promotes the concept that these events are outside of human influence or control. In fact, they are predictable results of specific actions;

Whereas, we can identify their causes and take action to avoid them. These are **not "acts of God", but predictable results of the laws of physics;**

Whereas, use of the word "accident" works against bringing the appropriate resources to bear on this enormous problem. **It allows the idea that the resulting injuries are an unexpected part of life;**

Now, therefore, we the undersigned, in recognition of this life saving and injury preventing opportunity, do hereby proclaim a national campaign:

"Crashes Aren't Accidents"

To eliminate the word "accident" from the realm of unintentional injury, on the highway and across the nation, with our partners, with the media, and in all public contexts.

**I encourage the use of other appropriate terms such as "crash," "collision," "incident," and "injury."**

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<http://web.archive.org/web/20040409081644/http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/NhtsaNow/Archive/1997/v3.11/>  
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