

Montana Trooper

On the Road



On February 7, 2010, Trooper Tony Beehler was investigating a crash on I-90 at MM 479 when his patrol car was struck by another vehicle. Trooper Beehler was seated in his car with a civilian when the collision occurred. The impact was hard enough to cause an injury after Trooper Beehler's head to strike the door jamb. We are happy to report that at this point his injury does not appear to be serious and the civilian is also fine. This is yet another reminder to be extra careful out there.

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On January 14, 2010, a sheet of ice on the pavement contributed to this school bus to sliding sideways off the road and rolling down a short rocky embankment at the south end of Missoula County. Fortunately, the driver

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was just starting his morning route and no kids were onboard. This crash was investigated by Trooper Chris Hamilton with assistance from Captain Tom Hamilton, Trooper Lath Keith, and Trooper Scott Bennett.

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In this close call investigated by Trooper Michael Briggs, a motorist struck a guardrail on Interstate 94 near Fallon, and the guardrail passed through the driver side rear and out the trunk, narrowly missing a passenger who was seated in the middle rear seat.

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Trooper Michael Briggs submitted this photo of a commercial vehicle fire, which took place on Interstate 94 near Glendive in September of 2009.

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Congratulations to Detachment 112, which received an award for the highest DUI arrest average for 2009. Detachment 112 averaged 30 DUI arrests per trooper for 2009.

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On January 31, 2010, Trooper Dan Amundson stopped a rental vehicle that was speeding on Interstate 90 near milepost 485. The two occupants were residents of North Dakota traveling from Washington to North Dakota, and the trooper could detect the odor of marijuana coming from the vehicle. The two male occupants displayed other drug trafficking indicators, and a K-9 was deployed and hit on the vehicle. After a search warrant was obtained, marijuana was found concealed in the third row seat area. The total seizure was eight pounds of marijuana, along with some hashish and \$790 in currency.

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This spring, Trooper Cherie Lofton stopped a vehicle on a RADD report in the Bozeman I-90 rest area. The two men in the vehicle gave conflicting stories about their trip to see friends, and had very little money and belongings for a cross country trip. One explained, "We will be reimbursed for our trip once we

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get there." Consent for a search was obtained, and seven pounds of marijuana were found, along with valium and other drug paraphernalia. A drug influence evaluation was performed on the driver by Sergeant Steve Wisniewski, and the driver was also charged DUI drugs.

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Trooper Darvin Mees has been selected as the MHP's nominee for the "Looking Beyond The License Plate" award. This award is sponsored by the Highway Safety Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police with the support of 3M Traffic Safety Systems Division.

Mees' nomination was based on a traffic stop for failure to display a front license plate as required in March of 2010 which resulted in a seizure of over five pounds of marijuana and nearly \$15,000 in cash.

Congratulations Trooper Mees!

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On May 17, 2010, a rental vehicle from Washington was stopped for following too closely on Interstate 94 near milepost 142. The driver was from Oregon and was traveling to Illinois. The trooper noted drug trafficking indicators, and the driver had a history of drug and violent offenses. A K-9 was not available, so the trooper released the subject, but called ahead to the North Dakota Highway Patrol, who later stopped the vehicle and located thirty three pounds of marijuana in the trunk.

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On Sunday, June 20, 2010, a golf ball sized hail and rain storm traveled



through the Billings Heights, after which several funnel clouds were spotted in the area. One such funnel cloud touched down on the vicinity of Main Street, destroying the grounds, façade, and roof of the Metrapark arena, which was fortunately empty. The F2 tornado with wind speeds up to 130 mph traveled up Main Street, destroying several other businesses in its path before dissipating. In addition, local residents experienced flooding. Luckily, only one injury was reported, with no loss of life experienced. Montana Highway Patrol troopers responded and assisted with traffic control until the area could be secured and clean up could begin.

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On March 7, 2010, this vehicle lost control in the Bozeman Pass, bounced off the jersey rail, and traveled back across both lanes. When it struck the dirt, it rolled once. A single strand of wire on the right-of-way fence kept it from rolling down a 100 foot embankment and onto the railroad tracks. This

crash was investigated by Trooper Dave Oliverson and Sergeant Steve Wisniewski.

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On January 4, 2010, Trooper Marvin Reddick was investigating a crash on Highway 287 north of Townsend near the silos. His vehicle was positioned approximately 35 feet off the southbound edge of the four lane roadway, near a fence line, behind a vehicle that had been involved in a crash. As he was sitting in his car documenting crash information a pickup traveling northbound on 287 lost control, crossed all lanes of traffic, entered the eastbound ditch and struck the driver's side of Trooper Reddick's car. Trooper Reddick saw the pickup at the last moment and leaned toward the center of his patrol car. His movement in the car reduced the much of the impact to his body. The patrol car was totaled. Fortunately, Trooper Reddick only suffered minor injuries, was checked out by ambulance personnel at the scene, and was released. The young female driver of the pickup indicated to Sgt. Knapp that she lost control on the ice and upon doing so just let go of the steering wheel. This crash is yet another reminder for us to be extra vigilant while out on the highway and continually watch for errant drivers, particularly while the roadways are icy.

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On June 12, 2010, Troopers Jason Grover and Kyle Hayter presented Ashley Schwarz, age 22, with a "Saved by the Belt" award. Ashley was the restrained passenger of a Ford Focus that was traveling down Highway 39 toward Colstrip on April 22, 2010. The driver leaned

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down to pick something up off the floor of the car, and the car drifted off the right shoulder of the road and into the ditch. It then struck a driveway and rolled more than twice, finally coming to rest on the passenger side. Front and side airbags had deployed. While the unrestrained driver sustained serious injuries and had to be flown to Billings for treatment, Ashley suffered less serious injuries. Trooper Richard Drake nominated Ashley to receive the "Saved by the Belt" award because this crash was an example of how wearing a seat-belt prevented more serious injuries.

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This post impact photo is of Trooper Tamra Winchell's patrol car from a late January collision which occurred as she was parked alongside the highway. As you can see, the damage is significant. This crash is a good reminder for everyone to make sure your issued equipment is stored in a fashion that would best prevent the equipment from being pushed into the passenger compartment of the car in the event a violent rear end impact occurs. □

