

EXECUTIVE DIGEST

OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

This report, issued in December 1997, contains the results of our performance audit* of the Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP), Michigan Department of State Police.

AUDIT PURPOSE

This performance audit was conducted as part of the constitutional responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General. Performance audits are conducted on a priority basis related to the potential for improving effectiveness* and efficiency* .

BACKGROUND

The mission* of OHSP is to save lives and reduce injuries on Michigan roads through leadership, innovation, facilitation, and program support in partnership with other safety professionals.

OHSP is the agency designated to coordinate all highway safety activities in Michigan and to distribute federal funds related to highway safety activities. OHSP also administers the secondary road patrol (SRP) program which provides funding to county sheriff departments to conduct patrolling, monitoring, and other duties on secondary roads. In addition, OHSP performs the administrative duties for the Michigan Truck Safety

Commission (MTSC), a State agency established to improve truck safety by providing programs to the trucking industry and citizens of Michigan.

During fiscal year 1995-96, OHSP expended approximately \$5.2 million on highway safety and crash data collection activities and \$8.6 million on the SRP program. MTSC expended approximately \$2.7 million on its programs during fiscal year 1995-96. As of June 1, 1997, OHSP had 23 employees.

**AUDIT OBJECTIVE,
CONCLUSION, AND
NOTEWORTHY
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness of OHSP in meeting its mission to save lives and reduce injuries on Michigan roads.

Conclusion: The programs administered by OHSP appeared to have impact on the occurrence and severity of traffic crashes; however, because of the number of factors and variables that influence traffic crashes, we could not determine the actual level of impact OHSP had in limiting traffic crashes. Overall, injuries and fatalities have increased during 3 of the past 4 years. Traffic crashes have increased every year since 1992. We noted reportable conditions* related to OHSP developing outcome* measures and evaluating the effectiveness of individual initiatives (Finding 1), allocating SRP funds (Finding 2), and conducting an impact and cost effectiveness study for the SRP program (Finding 3).

Noteworthy Accomplishments: OHSP is developing an assessment instrument to enable communities to identify their traffic safety assets and deficits and then develop an implementation plan to address them. OHSP is also developing an automated traffic crash report which will

allow a police officer investigating a crash to enter data directly into a computer program. Currently, the officers complete a hard copy report and the report is entered into a computer program by the Department's Criminal Justice Data Center staff.

In addition, OHSP, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation, has facilitated the development of the Michigan Safety Management System. In 1997, the second annual Traffic Safety Summit hosted over 300 advocates who attended traffic safety workshops.

**AUDIT SCOPE AND
METHODOLOGY**

Our audit scope was to examine the program and other records of the Office of Highway Safety Planning. Our audit was conducted in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

Our audit procedures included examining OHSP's records and activities for the period October 1, 1994 through April 30, 1997.

To accomplish our objective we obtained an understanding of OHSP's operations by conducting a preliminary survey. We obtained an understanding of OHSP's internal control structure* relating to the administration of federal, SRP, and MTSC grants and assessed the procedures for monitoring these grants. We also reviewed traffic safety-related statistics for Michigan and other states. We recalculated the allocation of SRP funds using fiscal year 1995-96 data, and we included a summary of the

recalculation in the supplemental information section of this report.

AGENCY RESPONSES

Our audit report contains 3 findings and corresponding recommendations. OHSP agreed, in general, with all of the audit findings. However, it contended that two of the findings require action on the part of the Legislature before OHSP can implement the recommendations.