



LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

Sept. 2, 2026

GHSA awards Sudden Impact Program at Annual Meeting

Sept. 2, 2026 – Today, the Governors Highway Safety Association awarded the New Orleans Sudden Impact Program, in partnership with Louisiana State Police, and supported by the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission, the Peter K. O’Rourke Special Achievement Award.

The award was presented during the awards ceremony at the 2026 GHSA Annual Meeting that took place in Minneapolis, MN, August 29 – September 2. Accepting the award on behalf of Sudden Impact were Louisiana State Police Superintendent Col. Frank Besson; LSP Major Nick Manale; LHSC Executive Director and Governor’s Representative for Highway Safety Lisa Freeman; LHSC Deputy Director Dortha Cummins; Bridget Gardner, RN, University Medical Center; and Madison Caillouet, MPH, UMC.

The Sudden Impact program is a comprehensive injury prevention program that educates more than 6,000 Louisiana high school students annually. The program is interactive and includes multiple engagements to deliver and reinforce critical traffic safety messages and to discourage poor decision making behind the wheel. Louisiana State Police, trauma personnel, and individuals impacted by motor vehicle crashes take part in the presentations. The program highlights several behavioral issues, including driving under the influence, texting while driving, and not wearing a seat belt.

“On behalf of LHSC, I am extremely proud of everyone responsible for Sudden Impact who has earned this prestigious award,” LHSC Executive Director and the Governor’s Representative for Highway Safety, Lisa Freeman said.

According to the official GHSA news release, “Sudden Impact is recognized for outstanding leadership in advancing traffic safety and injury prevention across Louisiana. Through hospital-based education, strong medical and law enforcement partnerships, statewide collaboration, and data-driven programming, these initiatives have expanded from local efforts into a comprehensive network reaching thousands of young drivers, families, schools, hospitals, first responders, and community partners.”

“By addressing teen driver safety, impaired and distracted driving, and occupant protection, the program has produced measurable improvements in knowledge, behavior, seat belt use, and statewide safety outcomes, demonstrating a sustained commitment to reducing preventable motor vehicle crash injuries and fatalities.”

“Sudden Impact works like an echo that reaches beyond each presentation,” Freeman said. “These young people are learning positive driving behaviors that stick with them, and in turn, they share the experience with their friends and families.”

This award is given annually to recognize notable achievements in the field of roadway safety by both organizations and individuals. Peter K. O'Rourke (1943–1996), during his lifetime, served as GHSA Chair and was a renowned leader in the field of highway safety.

[Watch the Sudden Impact award video here.](#)



(Left to right) Louisiana State Police Major Nick Manale; LHSC Deputy Director Dortha Cummins; LHSC Executive Director and Governor's Representative for Highway Safety, Lisa Freeman; Bridget Gardner, RN, University Medical Center; Madison Caillouet, MPH, UMC; and LSP Superintendent Col. Frank Besson.

For more information, contact:

Gregory Fischer
Public Information Officer
DPS – Louisiana Highway Safety Commission
Gregory.Fischer@la.gov
225-925-7858 (work)
225-489-1969 (mobile)