



On Patrol

10-Year Anniversary Celebrated in Style

by Ursula Vogler, MTC SAFE



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(1) Tow trucks line up at the start of the rodeo (photo credit: MTC SAFE). (2) Rodney Pozzi concentrates on his driving. (3) Truck and car go through their paces. (4) CHP officers Steve Barruel and Jessie Martinez take measurements to help determine rodeo winner (credit for photos 2, 3 and 4: Bill Hall, Caltrans).

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It was a cold, blustery Saturday morning in Alameda when the Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol's 10th anniversary celebration got under way on Aug. 17. By the time the day ended, however, the enthusiastic participation of over 200 guests had warmed and brightened the day considerably.

The combined annual awards event/10th anniversary festivities included — in addition to the usual barbecue, awards ceremony and games — speeches and a tow truck rodeo.

Praise for the FSP Program

Representatives of the three partner agencies, motorists who have been helped by the FSP, and the tow operators were featured speakers. The chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (MTC SAFE) served as emcee for the proceedings, and

introduced Kevin Green, assistant chief of the Golden Gate Division of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and Albert Yee, director of Operations for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 4.

Each of the three spoke of the accomplishments of the Bay Area FSP and the contributions of the partner agencies over the past decade. Seema Sharma and Melonye Phoenix, Oakland motorists, described how they were assisted by the FSP in separate incidents, and conveyed their heartfelt thanks (see article on next page). Rick Mendell, a tow oper-

ator for Redhill Towing who has been with the FSP for 10 years, related some of his experiences during that decade, and expressed his gratification at being part of the FSP program.

Urban Cowboys Get a Chance to Show Off Their Skills

Eight FSP tow operators participated in the rodeo, driving their shiny white tow trucks — each complete with a hitched vehicle — through a predetermined course that tested the drivers' accuracy and speed in maneuvering around and next to a maze of cones. Starting from a score of zero — indicating no mistakes — the drivers added a point for any cone touched or knocked over and two points for every change in direction required to correct the truck's or the towed vehicle's position.

Rodney Pozzi, driver for Yarbrough Bros. Towing in Santa Rosa, racked up

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First-Hand Experiences Prove FSP's Worth

by Réka Goode, MTC Public Information

Two grateful motorists who were helped in recent months by the Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) went out of their way to repay the favor — they provided glowing testimonials to the program at the FSP's 10th anniversary celebration in mid-August.

Neither of the two were familiar with the FSP before they were rescued and each had a similar, wary reaction when a gleaming white tow truck pulled up behind them on the shoulder of the freeway.

Melonye Phoenix, on her way to work at 6:30 in the morning, looked in her rear-view mirror and thought, "I wonder who that is, and what does he want?" when she saw the FSP driver. Seema Sharma, Oakland marketing consultant, thought to herself, "He's going to try to sell me something."



Bill Hall, Caltrans

Melonye Phoenix

Interstate 880 on her way from Oakland to Pleasanton, and was impressed with how quick, pleasant and helpful the FSP driver who changed her tire was. "And I even made it to work on time," she marveled.

Seema Sharma was driving on Interstate 580 in Oakland one morning when she ran out of gas near the Keller Street exit. While she was on her cell

Both women were surprised and relieved by the information they received from the driver about the FSP program, and thankful for the help they got. Phoenix had had a flat tire on

phone to her insurance company, which couldn't promise to send help for at least an hour, an FSP tow truck appeared and the driver hopped out and provided her with a free gallon



MTC SAFE

Seema Sharma

of fuel. Sharma's reaction, once her apprehension about the helpful stranger was allayed, was "Wow, this is great!"

Since then, she has told all her friends about the program, she said, and noted, "It's a good service to offer. Anything we can do to directly improve traffic congestion is a plus."

Phoenix seconded the sentiment, saying, "The FSP is a wonderful thing, especially for people who don't have a cell phone or who can't walk very far to get help."

The Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol: A Decade of Partnering

by Wes Wells, MTC SAFE

The Bay Area Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) program is truly a unique partnership, in which contractors, drivers and three public agencies — the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways, Caltrans, and the California Highway Patrol — work together toward a common goal: serving the public.

As we celebrate 10 years of cooperative effort, we see a program that has succeeded largely because it is built on mutual respect. This respect is based on and fosters open communication, a sense of a common cause, using "we" instead of "I" in dealing with the issues affecting the program, and taking a positive approach to problem-solving. What drives all of the partners to work together effectively is our sense of responsibility to the motorists we serve and our resolution to make the best possible use of the public's hard-earned tax dollars.

That the FSP is a successful program can be seen in a number of ways. It is a program that the state Legislature and the governor support,

increasing funding by \$5 million statewide at the same time that they are dealing with a \$23 billion shortfall for other programs. It is a program in which the public has so much confidence that they are willing to be taxed to pay for it.

It is a program whose drivers express pride in their contribution to reducing congestion and improving motorists' safety. And, finally, it is a program in which the motorists who are helped by those drivers are willing to go the extra mile to show their appreciation by writing, phoning and e-mailing their profound gratitude — some even giving up a Saturday morning to express their thanks in person! (See article above.)

Upcoming Events

Technical Advisory Committee Meetings

8:30 a.m., Tuesdays

MTC MetroCenter
November 12

1999 Harrison St., 17th Floor
December 10

Tow Contractor's Meeting

11 a.m., Tuesday
MTC MetroCenter
November 12

Quarterly Driver Refresher Training

11 a.m.–1 p.m.
CHP, Oakland
December 5 and 6

CHP, Dublin
December 19 and 20

Proficiency Testing

7 a.m.–4 p.m.
CHP, Vallejo
November 18

Certification Classes

7 a.m.–4 p.m.
CHP, Vallejo
November 20–22




Photos by Ed Hall, Catherine, and Wes Wells and Linda Lee, MTC SAFE


Day Aiea Freeway Service Patrol 10th Anniversary — August 11,

The Public Speaks


Motorists continue to send and phone in praise and descriptions of their experiences with the FSP program. Here are a few recent comments.


Voicemail

 (8/20/02) "This morning when I was driving to work on Interstate 880, I got a flat tire. Luckily, I was near one of the call boxes and called the number. The operator said the Freeway Service Patrol could be at my service in probably 20 minutes. Believe it or not, within five minutes the truck was there! The gentleman was extremely helpful. And a very unpleasant situation for me was changed to a very pleasant situation! I was just calling to say thank you very much!"


 (8/23/02) "Al Best of Beat 20 picked me up on Aug. 21 around 5 o'clock. And I wanted to tell you that I got very good service. I'd never heard of the Freeway Service Patrol before and I'm quite pleased to know that it's out there. It's a very valuable thing. I cannot compliment you enough. And I did want to call and thank you for the service and urge you to expand it."

Letters


 (7/19/02) "I blew a tire this morning on Highway 101, northbound, during the morning commute. The CHP saw me, and called a tow truck for me. The truck was there in 15 minutes! Your driver, Alfred, was terrific! He would not accept a tip as a thank you — he told me that the service is free and that's what they are there for. I can't thank you enough."


 (7/22/02) "Please accept our heartfelt thanks and warmest appreciation for the two Freeway Service Patrol rescuers who saved us by installing our spare tire. We are so glad and thankful we have this service."


E-mail

 (6/24/02) "A scary experience turned into a positive one this morning, thanks to K. Fragiadakis of your Freeway Patrol Service. My tire blew out in the fast lane and I was only

able to stop in the center median of Interstate 280. I am 6 months pregnant and was very nervous as my car shook when the other cars whizzed by. Mr. Fragiadakis and the CHP helped get me to a safer location, then Mr. Fragiadakis changed my tire. I was grateful not to have to get out of my car. Your program provides a wonderful service."

 (7/24/02) "This morning I was the recipient of the finest roadside service that I have ever received. At 9:45 a.m., on southbound Interstate 880, doing 65 miles an hour, I had a blow-out. While I was on the phone [to AAA], a white tow truck miraculously appeared in front of me. Norman Stovall walked over and politely explained the service, gave me a brochure and made sure I did not feel the need to get out of the car and risk getting hit. A minute later, he jacked up my car, and replaced the severely damaged tire. I was back on my way by 10:10 a.m. So thank you — big thanks to Norman and thanks to whoever thought of the idea to have these guys out on the road to help people like me."

 (8/22/02) "I am just writing to say thanks for a surprise — and a good deed. R. Bettencourt whisked out of nowhere to change a flat on our boat trailer last Sunday, Aug. 18, 2002. This service is remarkable!!!"

 (9/3/02) "Last week, on Aug. 29, at 7:15 a.m., Ken Glasere rescued me from the side of the road — Highway 85, northbound, right at the junction of Interstate 880, in rush-hour traffic. I have never been so happy to see a stranger in my life. I was completely rattled, as my front tire had blown out. I was totally impressed with Ken — his service, his manner, and his willingness to risk his own life to help others. Thank you for the program and please take care of good people like Ken."

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Despite such dramatic occurrences, Carter said that, surprisingly, the most frequent assistance he provides to motorists as he patrols the winding mountain road is to give them directions. Interacting with people is the part of the job he enjoys most, Carter said. "There are a lot of good officers, my bosses are wonderful, and the people are great," he commented. "The FSP is a good program — I'm glad I'm in it."

Mike Malone, winner of the Beat of the Quarter award for the second quarter of 2002, would agree with Carter's assessment. "It's very rewarding to see the look on motorists' faces as they realize that they are no longer stranded — and what's more, they don't have to pay for it," he said.

Malone, who has been a tow truck driver and employee of Campbell's Towing of San Jose since September 2000, has driven four different FSP beats in that time, and is currently assigned to Beat 30 on the Peninsula. He describes this beat — which covers Interstate 280 between Interstate 380 and State Route 92, as well as SR 92 between U.S. 101 and State Route 1 — as the most scenic of the beats he's covered. But, he noted, while the route into Half Moon Bay has a great view, as a two-lane road SR 92 requires drivers to pay close attention to their driving.

One young motorist recently came around a curve in that road too fast and ended up with his pickup truck hanging over the edge of a 60- to 70-foot drop, saved from falling only by the back wheels having caught on the guard rail. Malone's beat partner was able to get the driver out of the pickup safely and then he and Malone secured the truck so it wouldn't continue on down the steep embankment.



Mike Malone

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only four points, to win the top prize. Coming in second was Chino Alcantar of Courtesy Road Patrol of San Jose, and third was Mike Brown, Chevron Tow Service, Fremont.

The other participants were Tony Arroyo, All Bay Cities (ABC) Towing; Gerardo Menendez, B & A Body Works and Towing; Bryan Davis, Bryrich/Road One; Tommy Caughey, Campbell's Towing; and Joe McDonald, Great America Towing.

Fun and Games

The lavish barbecue picnic lunch was followed by games and activities for the children. Approximately 25 children of all ages (including some adults!) participated in an informal soccer match organized by Vincent Rivero and Jaime Maldonado of MTC SAFE. A few yards away, Margaret Loza, Rose Santos and Desiree Carrillo of Great America Towing helped children use clay and crayons to create works of art, and the three volunteers painted fanciful designs on the youngsters' faces. The highlight of the activities for the children was the handing out of "Chipper" dolls, donated by the CHP.



Bryan Davis (second from right) accepted Bryrich/Road One's Contractor of the Year award. He is flanked (left to right) by Randy Hammon, Gary Patrick and Larry Miller.

Awards

Capping the day's festivities was the awards ceremony, which started this year with the presentation of the **Best in Tow** award for the winners of the tow truck rodeo. Next, the **Contractor of the Year** award was presented to Bryan Davis of Concord's Bryrich/Road One, which has been a contractor with the FSP program since 1999.

All photos this page: Bill Hall, Caltrans



Driver of the Year Steven Parker

has been with the FSP program for three years, and was honored for his excellent service, commitment to the program and pride in his job.

The **Golden Paperclip** award, which is given annually to the contractor who has consistently submitted neat, timely and accurate paperwork, was presented to Charlie Scharff of ABC Towing of Concord. ABC Towing has been with the program since 2001.

Serving a critical, though behind-the-scenes, role in the FSP program are the CHP dispatchers. This year, the **Dispatcher of the Year** award was shared by Kitty Large and John Moody. Each was honored for dedication and service to the FSP program.

Drivers who have been with the FSP for three or more years received awards as well. This year's honorees were:

Three-Year Service Awards

Glenn Castaneda and William Jauregui, *B & A Body Works and Towing*; Deepak Patel, *Campbell's Towing*; Lenton Gaines, Mark Henry, Raymond Nelson and Trevor Piscitello, *Chevron Tow Service*; Chino Alcantar and David Schley, *Courtesy Road Patrol*; Jack Ladd, *Ladd's Auto Body and Towing*; Bryan Davis and Larry Miller, *Bryrich/Road One*; Steven Parker and Rodney Pozzi, *Yarbrough Bros. Towing*

Five-Year Service Awards

Richard Bilafer, Robert Bilafer and James Dowd, *B & A Body Works and Towing*; Steven Pauley, *Campbell's Towing*

Steven Parker of Yarbrough Bros. Towing was selected as **Driver of the Year** in recognition of his outstanding performance, based on motorist survey forms, letters, e-mails, voice-mails and CHP officer feedback. Parker

Michael Brown and Norman Stovall, *Chevron Tow Service*; Uriel Macedo and Ambika Maharaj, *Ken Bett's Towing*; Jose Rivera and Ellis Thomas, *Redhill Towing* **Seven-Year Service Award** Stephen Vallejos, *Chevron Tow Service* **Nine-Year Service Awards** Leon Esquenazi, *Campbell's Towing*; Doug Grafmiller, *Courtesy Road Patrol* **10-Year Service Awards** Kevin McCarthy and Rick Mendell, *Redhill Towing*



Contractor's Choice award winners

In addition to these honors, the annual **Contractor's Choice** award was presented to members of contractors' staffs — drivers or office personnel — selected by the contractors to acknowledge exceptional contributions to the FSP program. The recipients this year were (left to right in photo) Steven Parker, *Yarbrough Bros. Towing*; David Teixeira, *Pito's Towing*; Ken Carter, *Dick's Automotive Transport*; Walt Barrows, *Ladd's Auto Body and Towing*; Glenn Castaneda, *B & A Body Works and Towing*; Diane Apodaca, *Campbell's Towing*; John Hayes, *ABC Towing*; Larry Miller, *Bryrich/Road One*; Chino Alcantar, *Courtesy Road Patrol*; Mike Brown, *Chevron Tow Service*; and (not pictured) Uriel Macedo, *Ken Bett's Towing* and "Andy" Shu Wu, *Redhill Towing*

Finally, an **Award of Special Recognition** is given each year to a person who has made an outstanding contribution to the success of the FSP program. This year, MTC SAFE's Wes Wells was honored for his 10 years of dedication and commitment to the program.



Wes Wells, of MTC SAFE, wins Award of Special Recognition

Quarterly Awards for January through June 2002

by Réka Goode, MTC Public Information

BEAT OF THE QUARTER

For the second quarter in a row, **Chevron Tow Service** has captured the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) Beat of the Quarter prize. This time, the award is for **Beat 26**, which runs along Interstate 580 between Harrison Street in Oakland and Interstate 238 in San Leandro. The beat was patrolled by Kevin Mullette and his beat partner, Alphonzo Breland, during the first quarter of 2002, the period for which Beat 26 was honored. The two tow operators are now assigned to the adjacent beat on I-580, Beat 27.



Vincent Haavisto, CEO of Chevron Tow Service (right), poses with the company's president, Kim Skinner (center), and FSP supervisor, Norman Stovall.

Chevron, which has offices in Oakland and Fremont, currently is responsible for three FSP beats — Beat 27, and Beats 14 and 18 in the Interstate 880 corridor from near Hayward all the way to Milpitas. Seven trucks are assigned to the beats, and Chevron has more than a dozen FSP-trained drivers.

Mullette lauds the teamwork that keeps the FSP going, with the drivers and California Highway Patrol officers working together to keep freeways cleared. He attributes Chevron's success in winning Beat of the Quarter awards to the fact that "We have great dedication to the FSP program, and we make sure that we're right on problems as they happen."

Another repeat winner of the Beat of the Quarter award is **Redhill Towing** of San Rafael, which garnered the award for the second quarter of 2002, exactly one year after its first win for the same beat: **Beat 4**. An FSP tow contractor since 1992, the company has covered a total of 21 beats in that time — a record number of beats for one contractor.

Redhill currently has a total of 16 certified FSP drivers, with 13 of them driving



Redhill Towing's FSP manager Rick Mendell (left) and company owner, Joe Paz, Sr. (right)

beats every day. The company also has a fleet of 15 tow trucks dedicated to the FSP.

Three drivers are assigned to Beat 4, which runs along Interstate 880 from Broadway in Oakland to Interstate 238 in San Leandro and then along I-238 between I-880 and Interstate 580. Redhill's general manager, Rick Mendell, noted that it is an extremely active beat, with a lot of heavy car and truck traffic and a lot of stalls in the lanes. "It keeps the drivers very busy, but there is good teamwork between them, and they generally are able to respond quickly to incidents," Mendell commented.

"We have a good crew of drivers," he went on to say. "They are out there putting their lives on the line so motorists don't have to."

DRIVER OF THE QUARTER

Although **Ken Carter** has been driving for the FSP for only a little over a year, he is very familiar with the beat he is assigned to, Beat 16 along State Route 17 in the Los Gatos area. "I grew up here," said the 13-year veteran tow truck driver for Dick's Automotive Transport in Campbell and winner of the Driver of the Quarter award for the first quarter of 2002.

With few places to pull over, the eight-mile stretch of highway he patrols averages about three accidents a week, Carter estimated. And because of the road's configuration, accidents can take quite a long time to clear, he noted. A recent example was the rollover of a big rig between Summit Road and State Route 9. The gravel truck dumped its load across all four lanes, resulting in a road closure that lasted for more than five hours.



Ken Carter

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On Patrol is published periodically by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (MTC SAFE).

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