

WORLD DAY OF

# REMEMBRANCE

FOR ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS

A guide for organizers



World Health  
Organization

FEVR



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Cover picture: Lighting candles in Portugal

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Nearly every day, a serious road traffic crash somewhere in the world makes banner headlines. For every such news event, many other road traffic crashes – both fatal and non-fatal – go unreported because they have become such “routine” events. More than 3400 people die daily on the world’s roads and tens of thousands are disabled for life. The devastation that these incidents wreak on victims, their families, friends and communities is incalculable.

## FOREWORD

The Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, first held in 1993 in the United Kingdom and organized since then by nongovernmental organizations in a number of countries, was created as a means to give recognition to victims of road traffic crashes and the plight of their loved ones who must cope with the emotional and practical consequences of these events.

On 26 October 2005, the United Nations adopted a resolution which calls for governments to mark the third Sunday in November each year as World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. Observation of this day provides an opportunity to draw the public’s attention to road traffic crashes, their consequences and costs, and the measures which can be taken to prevent them. The day also provides an opportunity to remind governments and society of their responsibility to make roads safer.

The World Health Organization, RoadPeace and the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims have jointly developed this guide, *World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims: a guide for organizers*, to assist individuals and organizations wishing to plan events and develop related advocacy materials to mark the day. As the global road safety movement takes hold in countries around the world, it is anticipated that this remembrance day will grow in strength and visibility. This guide offers suggestions for collaborating with many sectors to ensure that the advocacy opportunity of this day is fully realized. We encourage all those concerned with road traffic crashes and their consequences to use the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims as a platform for their advocacy efforts.

Dr Etienne Krug  
Director  
Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention  
World Health Organization

Ms Brigitte Chaudhry  
Founder and President  
RoadPeace  
European Federation of Road Traffic Victims

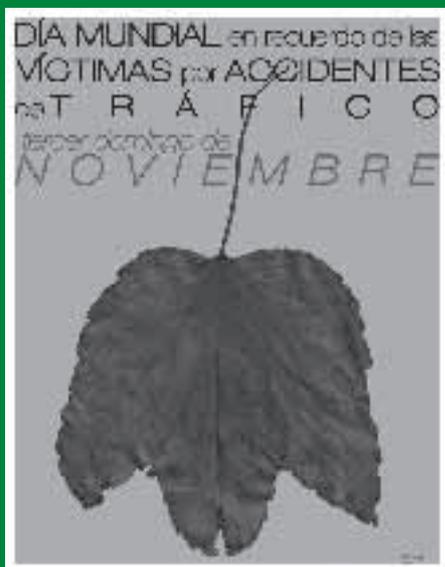
‘Public remembrance is not for the benefit of victims to remember what happened to them. Victims remember well what happened to them. Public reflection is the act of recognition. It states to the victims and their families that their humanity is valued, that their loss is our loss and that their suffering is shared, if only through recognising the tragedy and error of its occurrence.’

(Holocaust Memorial Day Booklet 2007).

## INTRODUCTION

Each year 1.2 million people are killed in road traffic crashes around the world, leaving behind shattered families and communities. Most of those killed are young, in the prime of their lives, whose presence and contributions are greatly needed by their families and countries. The impact of such traumatic events is the cumulative toll of suffering, truly unimaginable since each year more millions are added to the millions of people who are already affected and whose suffering is aggravated by inadequate response to their loss (1,2,3,4). As well as the emotional and psychological pain endured, losing a family member can put significant financial strain on a family. In many countries, families are frequently driven into poverty by the cost of prolonged medical care, the loss of a family breadwinner, or the extra funds needed to care for people with disabilities (1,2,3,5,6).

Despite the extent of the problem, the issue of road traffic death and injury and the suffering of victims has been largely ignored until now (1,2,3,5,7,8,9). It has been left mainly to nongovernmental victim organizations to offer assistance to fellow-victims and to try and change attitudes by highlighting the extreme human suffering caused by road traffic crashes and the indifference by society. An annual remembrance day for road traffic victims began to be commemorated by victim organizations, starting in the United Kingdom in 1993, to bring the devastating impact of road deaths and injuries and lack of support to the widest attention; this day is now observed worldwide.



A Spanish poster announcing the day of remembrance for traffic victims.

## Why the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims?

Observed on the third Sunday in November every year, the Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims was initiated in 1993 by RoadPeace, the United Kingdom charity for road traffic victims (10). Since then, the day has been observed and promoted worldwide by RoadPeace, the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims and its many associated organizations.

On 26 October 2005, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 60/5 on improving global road safety. The resolution called for the third Sunday in November to be recognized as an annual day of remembrance for road traffic victims.

The World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims offers an annual opportunity to increase public awareness of the burden of road traffic collisions on communities, and to emphasize the need to initiate and promote efforts to control this major public health and development problem, and to assist victims.

### United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/5. Improving global road safety

*The General Assembly,*

...10. *Invites* Member States and the international community to recognize the third Sunday in November of every year as the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims as the appropriate acknowledgement for victims of road traffic crashes and their families;...

2005 (<http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/9982762.html>).

## Why this guide and for whom?

This guide is intended to provide guidance to organizations, institutions and individuals on how to plan and organize events on the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. Examples of events and activities that could take place are presented as ideas, but they would need to be developed to meet the specific objectives of a particular community and country.

This guide is written for everyone concerned about road traffic crashes and their consequences. It could be used by nongovernmental organizations, governmental agencies and international institutions interested in organizing an event to commemorate the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. It could also be used by individuals, road crash victims and family members, researchers, doctors, nurses, counsellors, emergency service personnel and members of civil society.

## How was this guide developed?

This guide was developed jointly by the World Health Organization, RoadPeace and the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims. It is based primarily on the experiences of nongovernmental organizations of road traffic victims, and the various acts of remembrance observed on the day over the past decade. A list of nongovernmental organizations that provided information is given in Annex 1.



# A BRIEF HISTORY

The idea of an annual day on which to remember road crash victims came from RoadPeace, the United Kingdom charity for road traffic victims. The third Sunday in November was chosen because it follows Remembrance Sunday, on which all those who have died in wars and conflicts are remembered in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries.

Remembrance Sunday gives people in the United Kingdom an opportunity to pause and reflect on the sacrifices made by service men and women (11). Wars and road traffic crashes are similar in that the most common victims are young and male, and the injuries equally horrific. The Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims focuses on the devastation caused by road traffic deaths, and on their impact on bereaved families and society. This devastating public health and development problem demands a more appropriate legal and societal response.

For many years, the organizations affiliated to the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims promoted and observed this day as the European Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. Slowly the remembrance day was introduced to other continents and by 2004 many events around the globe marked what had become informally known as World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. On 26 October 2005, the United Nations General Assembly called on all Member States around the world to recognize the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

## Key developments in the evolution of the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims

### 1993 ONWARDS>

RoadPeace initiates and promotes the remembrance day in the United Kingdom

- RoadPeace organizes events and conducts publicity nationwide, including issuing press releases and fact sheets.
- RoadPeace approaches places of worship and begins to organize a special annual service in London.
- From individual church services highlighting this serious issue in the past (notably at Coventry Cathedral in 1992), an annual day of remembrance ensures this is done regularly, prominently and widely.

### 1995 ONWARDS>

Remembrance day spreads throughout the United Kingdom and to other parts of Europe

- In the United Kingdom, services are held in Bath, Cambridge, Coventry, Leeds, Liverpool, London and Newcastle in 1995, rising quickly to 30 services throughout the United Kingdom each year.
- Delegates at the General Assembly of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims held in May 1995 in Liege, Belgium, support the idea of a common remembrance day and agree to join in its observance.
- The day becomes known as the European Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. Many of the organizations under the umbrella of the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims highlight the problems of road traffic deaths and injuries in their own countries.
- Victim organizations from Austria, Luxembourg and the Netherlands are the first to organize remembrance ceremonies and events in 1996, followed gradually by associations in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

### 1998 ONWARDS>

Remembrance day goes beyond Europe

- European Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims is adopted and observed in Argentina, Australia, Israel, South Africa and Trinidad.

### 2003 ONWARDS>

United Nations General Assembly endorses the Day

- WHO hosts a meeting of road victim charities and nongovernmental organizations of road victims; one of the issues discussed is how to achieve recognition of this day by the United Nations.
- During discussions on the road safety crisis by the United Nations General Assembly in 2004, the Ambassador of Bangladesh calls for a special day on which to highlight the global toll of road traffic deaths and injuries.
- The United Nations General Assembly endorses the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in a resolution adopted on 26 October 2005, calling upon all Member States and the international community to recognize this day.



**300 pairs of shoes are a sad marker of the monthly number of road traffic deaths in the United Kingdom.**

## GETTING STARTED

There are eight basic steps for planning and preparing for the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. All the steps are interrelated and may be carried out concurrently. For example, publicizing the day can start as soon as objectives and key messages have been developed, and continue throughout the entire preparation process. The eight steps are:

**Step 1: Form a working group**

**Step 2: Develop the objectives and key messages**

**Step 3: Obtain political support**

**Step 4: Expand the partnership**

**Step 5: Secure funding**

**Step 6: Publicize the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims**

**Step 7: Organize activities**

**Step 8: Evaluate the process**

It is important that plans should take into account what the event aims to achieve. Is it a commemorative service or gathering, or an event aiming to communicate and learn vital lessons, for example about attitudes to road traffic death and injury and to road victims? The decision on the purpose of the event will influence the form it will take and who should be involved in its organization.

# STEP 1: FORM A WORKING GROUP

A small working group can be useful to help with planning, organizing and promoting the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, regardless of whether it is being planned as a country-wide, city or local event.

Ideally, members of a working group should be drawn from different sectors, and victims should always be included. The group should identify a facilitator or coordinator. Decisions should be made jointly.

The main tasks of the working group are to:

- develop the objectives and key messages for the day;
- identify and elaborate activities;
- identify and secure a venue;
- develop a programme and related materials;
- invite speakers and other guests;
- oversee implementation of events on the day;
- publicize the day;
- conduct an evaluation of the planning process and activities.

A regular working group may eventually emerge. It may even have permanent contact details. However small, this group could plan and organize events from year to year for the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

# STEP 2: DEVELOP THE OBJECTIVES AND KEY MESSAGES

The objectives of observing the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims are:

- to remember the people killed and empathize with the suffering of bereaved families;
- to acknowledge the work of all those involved in the aftermath of road crashes – fire, police and ambulance personnel, doctors, nurses, counsellors and others who experience the disaster caused by road traffic crashes on a daily basis and are affected by it;
- to draw attention to the epidemic scale of road traffic deaths and injuries, and the potential risk to all road users;
- to raise awareness of the magnitude and impact of road traffic crashes on families and society, and the need for improved post-crash care and support for the bereaved and injured;
- to highlight the potential for preventing road traffic crashes and the importance of a more serious response to law-breaking on the road;
- to offer everyone the opportunity to review their contribution to road traffic injury prevention.

Organizers are encouraged to select one or more of these objectives, and use them in ways that suit their specific settings and plans.

Key messages for the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims can be used with relevant data and examples from each country, city, district and community.

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