

# On Patrol



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NEWS FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA FREEWAY SERVICE PATROL

## Freeway Service Patrol News Roundup

by MTC Staff

### Officer Umeki Joins the Team

Officer Steve Umeki recently joined the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) team, a switch from his previous work for the California Supreme Court where he spent the last four years providing judicial protection. Officer Umeki is excited about the opportunity to work on the programmatic side of FSP and we look forward to getting to know him.



Officer Steve Umeki

### New FSP Project Manager

Nina Rohlich assumed the role of the FSP project manager in January, and is now responsible for the FSP procurement process and contract management, as well as other planning and technical program-related activities. While Rohlich is a newcomer to FSP, she spent the last several years working for MTC on the new 511 Transit website where she collaborated with Bay Area transit agencies and started initiatives to inform the public about the 511 transit trip planner. Rohlich is looking forward to meeting and working with the FSP tow contractors and partner agencies!



Nina Rohlich, FSP Project Manager

### New Assistant Motorist Aid Coordinator

MTC SAFE bids farewell and good luck to Adrian Fine, who has left for graduate school in city and regional planning. Assuming his position is Rachel Zack, who hails from Philadelphia, where she worked with port operators on logistical improvements to their truck fleets while obtaining her graduate degree in land use and transportation planning at the University of Pennsylvania. Zack is looking forward to working with the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and the tow contractors to achieve the program's highest operating potential.



Rachel Zack, Assistant Motorist Aid Program Coordinator

### Low survey response rate? Read here!

We all know how difficult it can be to get motorists to mail in their FSP survey cards. Even after you have changed their tire or provided a free gallon of gas, motorists still are sometimes reluctant to fill in the form, or may forget to post it.

But did you know that the FSP program relies on data from these surveys for funding? In fact, since inception, each regional FSP program has been tracking the same six pieces of

Inside:	Page
<i>Safety Tips from Sergeant Barruel</i>	2
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	2
<i>FSP Statistical Summaries</i>	2
<i>Quarterly Awards</i>	3
<i>The Public Speaks</i>	4

data, allowing comparisons across the state. Using the following tips, we hope that we can increase our survey response rate.

- When you approach a motorist, wear a big smile, speak clearly and look them in the eye. Remember, you are offering a free service to someone in need – be their hero!
- Always explain the nature of the program to the motorist, describing the free services offered. Tell them you are there to help get them out of a sticky situation and on their way.
- Be responsive and understanding. Any given motorist on the side of the road is probably having a bad day, so be patient and hospitable.
- If you are offered a tip, refuse it by informing the motorist, “What would really help me is if you could complete and send in this survey form.”

# Safety Tips from Sergeant Barruel

In light of the increase in traffic collisions in the past few months, we would like to remind everyone of 21-year highway patrol veteran Sergeant Steve Barruel's mantra: "At the end of the shift, I'm going home!"

Here are some tips that can help ensure your safe return to loved ones at the end of the day.

**Be well rested.** It is a known fact that there have been traffic collisions, which resulted in property damage or death, where the driver was fatigued. Make sure you get enough rest before your shift.

**Check and double check.** An FSP driver saved his life recently by doing this. As he exited his truck, he decided to "check and double check" to ensure it was clear. At the last second, he saw a big rig heading towards him. The big rig sideswiped the tow truck, causing minor damage and minor injuries to the FSP driver. He is alive today because he "checked and double checked!"

**Minimize your exposure.** Though we don't treat a disabled

motorist like a racecar during its pit-stop, we certainly want to minimize exposure to the inherent dangers present on the freeway by expediting our services.

## **Be methodical in your approach and do things by the numbers.**

Though every incident can be different, using a methodical approach can ensure that no safety steps are left out. People are creatures of habit so be in the habit of creating a safe environment. Establish a method of approach (i.e., turn wheel towards traffic, turn on hazard lights, check traffic through the mirrors and by physically turning your head, remove your seatbelt, check traffic again before exiting, and approach on the off-traffic side while continuously checking traffic).

**Use common sense.** If it feels wrong, it probably is wrong. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance from your beat partner(s) or CHP. The FSP program is a partnership, not just administratively but operationally. It is imperative that when you need assistance, you ask for it.

**Know the FSP standard operating procedure (SOP).** Being familiar with the SOP will not only keep you out of trouble, but it may save your life.

## **Changes to Standard Operating Procedure**

- Approved safety vests are now required.
- Watch cap must have FSP logo, and OSHA composite work boots are now approved.
- There is no smoking in vehicle while on duty.
- Operator may stay with motorist at drop site up to 30 minutes only if requested to do so by the motorist.
- Operators should always approach vehicles from the non-traffic side.
- The use of cellular devices is prohibited during the shift, unless a hands-free device is used.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings**

8:30 a.m. Tuesdays at MTC, MetroCenter

- July 13, 2010
- September 14, 2010
- October 11, 2010
- November 9, 2010

### **Tow Contractors Meetings**

11 a.m. Tuesdays at MTC, MetroCenter

- July 13, 2010
- September 14, 2010
- November 9, 2010

### **Quarterly Driver Refresher Training**

11 a.m. at CHP, GGD  
June 17 & 18, 2010  
September 15 & 17, 2010  
11 a.m. at MTC, Oakland  
June 22 & 24, 2010  
September 29 & 30, 2010

### **Proficiency Testing**

7 a.m. at CHP, GGD  
August 9, 2010  
November 8, 2010

### **Certification Class**

7 a.m. at CHP, GGD  
August 18-20, 2010  
November 17-19, 2010

## **First Quarter Statistical Summary (July – September 2009)**

Total number of assists = 35,842

Percentage of assists involving people = 46.9 percent

Average number of assists per hour per truck = 0.98 (urban beats) & 0.81 (rural beats)

Percentage of motorist survey returns = 15.1 percent

Percentage of surveys rating service as excellent = 96.3 percent

Average motorist wait time = 9.1 minutes

## **Second Quarter Statistical Summary (October – December 2009)**

Total number of assists = 31,959

Percentage of assists involving people = 47.7 percent

Average number of assists per hour per truck = 0.81 (urban beats) & 0.69 (rural beats)

Percentage of motorist survey returns = 21.5 percent

Percentage of surveys rating service as excellent = 97.4 percent

Average motorist wait time = 9.1 minutes

## Quarterly Awards First Quarter, July – September 2009

### Driver of the Quarter

**Diane Apodaca** of Campbell's Towing has been certified with the Bay Area FSP program since 1994, and in that time has come to be "one the most valued members of our team," according to Don Pre-gents, a manager at Campbell's Towing. Many program participants know Diane for her big smile and sense of humor, but not as many of us know about her daily contributions to the program. "I'm always listening on the radio to train the new guys about inappropriate radio traffic, and to give them pointers," she says. Congratulations on your award, Diane!



*Diane Apodaca  
of Campbell's  
Towing*

### Beat of the Quarter

Palace Garage's **Beat 22** covers Interstate 580 from Pleasanton to near the top of the Altamont pass, one of the major commercial and travel routes in and out of the Bay Area. This winter, this section of freeway was the scene of major traffic incidents including jack-knifed big rigs and downed power lines – just another reason we are happy to have the Palace Garage team out there! During this period, Beat 22 achieved a laudable assist rate of 1.53 assists per truck per hour, and received nearly one third of their surveys back from motorists!



*Henry and William Anderson and  
Jeremy York, Palace Garage*

### Contractor of the Quarter

Covering Interstate 80 from Abernathy Road in Fairfield to Richards Boulevard in Davis, beats 34 and 37 make up the major route between the Bay Area and the Sacramento/Central Valley region. This section



*Vacaville Tow*

of highway is well known for large traffic delays and what seems like the constant din and confusion of construction. For all of these reasons, the FSP partners are glad to have a professional

and diligent company like **Vacaville Tow** patrolling the corridor. Both beats, which run two tow trucks each, achieved perfect scores of 7/7 on their quarterly report cards, a first for the Contractor of the Quarter award.

## Quarterly Awards Second Quarter, October – December 2009

### Driver of the Quarter

Beat 22 (I-580 near Livermore) is a major route for big rigs and can be especially challenging for our operators. Palace Garage's **Jeremy York** tackles this beat with a friendly attitude while continuously providing top quality service. Jeremy's dedication to the program and positive approach to motorists make him the Freeway Service Patrol's Driver of the Quarter. Congratulations, Jeremy!



*Jeremy York*

Daniel Cowan, has shown enormous potential. Motorists on the beat can expect a 7 minute wait time, and FSP can expect to provide service to more than one motorist per hour. For meeting all of the FSP goals and providing excellent service, Beat 18 is our Beat of the Quarter.

### Contractor of the Quarter

As the 2009 Contractor of the Year, we have come to expect great



*Dan Cowan, Supervisor (left), and Hurshel Myers,  
Owner of Myers Towing Services*

### Beat of the Quarter

Myers Towing began service on Beat 18 (I-880 near Fremont) in July of 2009. Since the company's recent beginnings, Beat 18, supervised by




*Bill's Towing owner Steve Barnes*

things from **Bill's Towing**. This family business, based in Novato since 1968, continues to deliver quality service on over 25 miles of Highway 101. Bill's Towing increased their survey returns by 29 percent over the fiscal year 2010 2nd quarter and received no violations, giving them a clean six month record. For their impressive work, we are awarding them Contractor of the Quarter.


# The Public Speaks


**M**otorists continue to mail, e-mail and phone in praise and gratitude for their experiences with the FSP program. Here are a few recent comments.


## VoiceMail

 (2/11/10) I wanted to pass along a good word for Mike Oliver. I was stuck on Interstate 580, on the side of the road with a ladder under my car, and Mike of Palace Towing did a great job of helping me and sending me on my way. I just wanted to let you know that you have a wonderful employee there.


## E-mail


 (12/4/09) I had some car issues where my car died on a busy freeway. I pulled over and called for assistance from a family member. Before they could arrive, Laurie [Varsallona] pulled up behind me in a FSP patrol vehicle. I was instantly relieved. She gave me a jump and I got home safely. She was VERY helpful, nice and knew her stuff. The relief I felt to be off the side of that road is indescribable. THANK YOU. This program is amazingly helpful and essential to people's safety in a situation such as I was in! My complete thanks to the program and Laurie!

 (12/16/09) Tonight on my way home, I ran out of gas just before my exit onto Airway Boulevard in Livermore. Within two minutes, I was approached by FSP driver W. Davidson. He was very courteous and I was surprised by the service he offered. If it wasn't for his help, I would have been stranded on the freeway for at least a half hour. One extra thing I noticed Mr. Davidson did was park his truck in a way that was protecting my vehicle from oncoming traffic from the freeway due to the curve in the road. That was above and beyond the call of duty, by far. This service is awesome; thank you very much for this program.


 (12/25/09) What a great program! On December 24th, I had a flat tire. I was going to be late for dinner with my family since my road assistance service agent told me I had to wait 45 minutes to one hour for their service people. In less than five minutes after my conversation with road assis-

tance, an angel stopped by and told me: "I would like to help you." H. Myers was awesome. His customer service skills were impressive and he arrived just in time for me to have a smile on my face and realize that I was going to spend that evening with my folks since this guy finished his work in three minutes. I wanted to give him a good tip and he told me: "No, I do not accept tips. Merry Christmas to you and your family!"

 (1/15/10) I am so incredibly grateful to Nick Nohr from Beat 15 who came to my assistance when I got a flat tire at the merge between 101 south and Highway 12 west. It was a dangerous place to have to stop and my phone didn't work to call anyone around. Nick was professional, courteous and kind, and said he would have me back on the road within 15 minutes and he did! What a great service!!! My family and I thank you so very much!!!

 (3/24/10) I would like to compliment you on providing a great service to the public. I was on Highway 17 on March 23 around 4:30 p.m. when my fan just fell off my truck, rendering it inoperable. FSP driver Favian [Pinon] came along about five to ten minutes after it happened and worked extremely hard to get the truck up to the summit and out of the way. Favian was pleasant, helpful and an all-around good person. If his attitude and professionalism is the norm of your organization, then you have one fine organization. Keep up the good work!

## Letters

 (12/21/09) I would like to commend the work of Dan Cowan, one of your Freeway Service Patrollers in the Bay Area. On Dec. 18, 2009, my left rear wheel got busted so I parked on the shoulder. I called AAA to ask their assistance in towing my car, but Mr. Cowan stopped and asked me if I had a spare tire, and offered his assistance to put on my tire for me. This is my first time knowing that we have a service like this on the freeways. I commend Mr. Dan Cowan for his quick response, courteous manner and excellent service. I feel safer knowing that we have people like him as part of the Freeway Service Patrol who are there to help. More power to this program and congratulations to a job well done!

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Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter  
101 Eighth Street  
Oakland, CA 94607-4700  
510.817.5700  
TDD/TTY 510.817.5769  
FAX 510.817.5848  
Web site <www.mtc.ca.gov>

## MTC

Executive Director: Steve Heminger  
Deputy Executive Directors:  
Ann Flemer, Andrew Fremier  
Director, Highway & Arterial Operations:  
Albert Yee  
MTC SAFE Senior Program Coordinator:  
Jaime C. Maldonado

## On Patrol Coordinator:

Rachel Zack 510.817.5753

## Copy Editor:

Karin Betts

## Graphics

Design/Production: David L. Cooper  
Photos (unless otherwise indicated):  
Sze Lei Leong

## California Highway Patrol, Golden Gate Division

Chief Bridget Lott; Lt. Julie Horstman;  
Sergeant Steve Barruel; Officers Steve Uemeki, Gary Lee, Joe Samuels and Marcos Rodriguez; Staff Service Analyst Dwyane Potts

## Caltrans, District 4

District Director: Bijan Sartipi  
Deputy Director of Operations:  
Sean Nozzari  
Office Chief: Cyrus Mashhoodi

## Caltrans FSP Staff:

Norman Anderson, Scotty Hsiao,  
Kane Wong 510.286.5917

## Local Tow Contractors:

Matt Yebra  
*Atlas Towing Services*, San Francisco  
Richard Bilafer  
*B & A Body Works and Towing*,  
San Francisco  
Steve Barnes  
*Bill's Towing*, Novato  
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