

Montana Trooper

Colonel's Message



Colonel
Tom Butler

My first message as colonel to the Association of Montana Troopers must express my profound gratitude and sincere appreciation to the AMT membership. It is a humbling reality to be named colonel of the Montana Highway Patrol and perhaps a little daunting as well. I owe heartfelt thanks to many former Highway Patrol members and current troopers who have played various roles shaping my career and my character, having provided critical guidance to me through the years. Thank you.

I am grateful for the collaboration between the AMT and Department of Justice/MHP in the past legislative session. Most importantly in the 2013 Legislative session was our joint response

to the retirement fund crisis. Together, we took proactive steps to correct estimated fund shortfalls, providing viable options to the legislature to solve the funding problem. It was satisfying to see our work culminate in a practical solution. This teamwork is consistent with my view of AMT and MHP tradition.

Of particular interest to AMT membership are the many changes in personnel in the MHP. Since the fall 2013 magazine issue, there have been twenty-eight troopers added to our ranks. The 55th MHP Recruit Academy added fifteen new troopers on August 30, 2013, and December, 2013, saw thirteen recruits begin the 56th MHP Recruit Academy. These troopers represent the future of the MHP, and from my view, they embody vast potential, talent, and dedication. Please welcome them when you have the opportunity.

Traffic deaths in Montana increased in 2013, with a significant increase in pedestrian fatalities. Failure to use safety restraints also continues to be a leading factor in fatal crashes. The marked rise in pedestrian fatalities has the Patrol

analyzing what factors were present and contributed to these deaths. Our efforts to ensure the safety of all who use Montana's highways will require progress in both areas, as well as addressing awareness of these issues in the public media. We must continue our diligent effort on all fronts until Montanans are consistently using safety restraints.

We are on the precipice of significant problems with the natural resource development in eastern Montana. With the exponential growth, stress to the highway infrastructure, and ever present demand for law enforcement presence, we have more work ahead of us. The creation of the Sidney detachment and the expansion of the MHP K-9 program are encouraging initial steps to confront the issues facing the MHP in eastern Montana.

Thanks so much for your hard work every day protecting everyone who utilizes Montana's highways. While you might not be able to see the results of your efforts every day, you make a significant difference in the safety of our state. Keep up the good work! □