



The Newsletter of the Montana Traffic Education Association

MTEA NEWS

Volume 30, Issue 3

Spring 2025

MTEA 2025 Conference ~~ Simply Driving: Complexities To Basics

By Riley Ramsey

Hello Traffic Educators!

Please pay close attention to the following information. We are really getting excited for the upcoming 2025 Annual Conference in April! We will be headed to Great Falls again. This year, the theme of the conference is **“Simply Driving: Complexities To Basics”**. Messages like this can seem cliché at times, but after all, this is what we are trying to accomplish with our students. We want to take the curriculum and as many of the laws, scenarios, unforeseen and foreseen problems, driver responsibilities, and anything else our experienced minds can think of and then relate it in the least complex way so that our students can absorb it and apply it to their lifetime of challenges behind the wheel.

With this being the theme of the event and the goal of our instruction, we can briefly discuss some highlights and plans for the conference this year. You will have access to great resources and updates that will be immediately applicable to you. The outcome will hopefully be that we return home to teach our students even better and more confidently. We plan on hearing information from law enforcement and legal minds having to do with best practices for our classroom and driving instruction. The topics we have been planning have to do with instructor due diligence and scope of duties, issues we need to consider with vehicle equipment and paperwork, information about cameras in the car (for training and/or liability reasons), documentation between your school district and the instructor(s), and other details we can sometimes overlook until an unfortunate event occurs.

We will also have details about traffic safety and current trends from the police perspective, and how they make decisions on patrol utilizing data and those trends. We hope to also have a discussion on the Montana Code Annotated when it comes to traffic safety and driver responsibilities.

Additionally, we hope to have some great resources on everything related to tires (some of the best insurance for your vehicle) and a fresh presentation about train safety with Operation Lifesaver from two staff members of the Burlington Northern - Santa Fe Railroad Company. We will also have some planned presentations concerning the Motor Vehicle Division, updates on the pre-application form for your students, and TEDRS updates with some important question and answer time. We will have an opportunity to learn from our peer instructors on matters that we can all benefit from.



Please talk to your administrator about this valuable opportunity and plan to register as soon as possible. We are hoping for a very large group this year, the chance to learn from each other, and foster new excitement to pass on the best practices to our students as they begin their licensing process. We look forward to seeing you there soon!!

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MTEA News is published by the Montana Traffic Education Association in the fall, winter, and spring. MTEA, PO Box 637, Conrad, MT 59425. Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, (406) 278-7856. MTEA News is mailed to members and published at MTEAOnline.org. The spring issue is mailed to all traffic educators in Montana as an invitation to the annual traffic education conference.

Submissions can be emailed to: sgrogan@forsyth.k12.mt.us.

Articles are due 10/1; 12/1; 2/1. MTEA reserves the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, and/or grammar.

MTEA President's Message

Encourage other teachers to join MTEA and attend the annual conference in Great Falls, April 27-29th.

Networking with other driver's education instructors provides a valuable opportunity to share ideas, resources, and teaching strategies. By collaborating with colleagues, educators can gain insights into new teaching techniques, learn about the latest tools and technologies, and even discuss student challenges to develop innovative solutions. This collective knowledge fosters an environment of growth for educators and ultimately benefiting their students.



1. Sharing Best Practices: Every instructor has unique experiences and strategies that have worked well in their classroom. Whether it's a particular approach to explaining the rules of the road or using technology to enhance learning, sharing best practices helps to refine teaching techniques and develop more effective lesson plans.

2. Access to Resources: Networking opens doors to a wealth of resources, from teaching materials and worksheets to digital tools and simulations that can enrich the driver's education curriculum. Collaboration with other teachers allows instructors to exchange these resources, making it easier to diversify lessons and cater to various learning styles.

3. Mentorship and Professional Growth: Experienced educators can mentor newer teachers, offering guidance and support. This mentorship can build confidence, help teachers overcome challenges, and allow for continuous professional development. In turn, new instructors may bring fresh perspectives and ideas that help keep the curriculum dynamic.

4. Staying Updated on Industry Changes: Laws, technologies, and best practices in driver's education are constantly evolving. Networking with peers provides opportunities to stay updated on regulatory changes, new tools (like simulation software or driver-assistance systems), and innovations in teaching methods that can better prepare students for the road.

Steffani Grogan (Forsyth)

Humor from Patty Saylor (Butte)

IF you get in a wreck on icy roads and happen to hit a pole and a fence,

AND IF you are still on your learners permit with no insurance and no person over 18 in the car,

AND IF you are with a group of kids on lunch break to get lunch,

AND IF you are talking to a police officer at the moment.....

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

Your Driver's Ed teacher of course. Just thought you needed to know!



MTEA Executive Board Meeting

January 19, 2025 (google meet format)

- Minutes, correspondence, and financial reports were reviewed.
- Reports on the newsletter, OPI updates, and possible legislative issues were heard.
- Discussion on the ADTSEA national conference scheduled for Billings took place. MTEA will help with host activities as needed.
- Detailed planning for the spring MTEA conference took place with planned speakers & sessions.
- Silent auction, door prizes, and Board assignments for the conference were reviewed.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 28 at the spring conference. Anyone having discussion items should contact Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary.

2025 ADTSEA Annual Conference

Sunday, July 20 - Wednesday, July 23, 2025

Billings Hotel and Convention Center

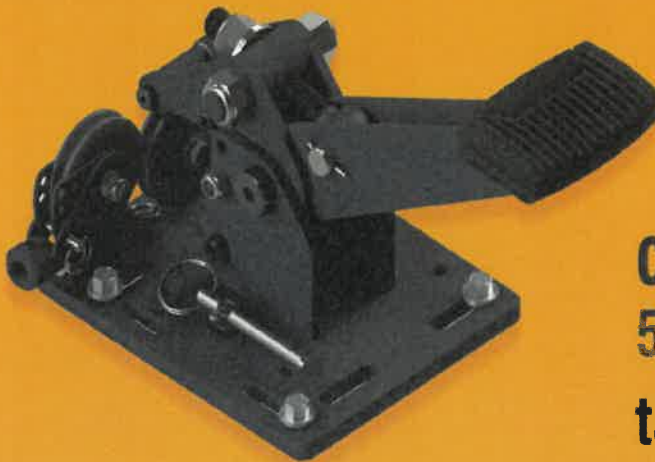
The ADTSEA Conference brings together national leaders in traffic safety and driver education in the interest of quality programs.

Program planners put together an extensive list of national leaders, motivational speakers, presenters, and awards recognition. Sessions are also designed to meet professional development requirements.

Consider attending this summer! Check out the agenda and conference registration materials at <https://www.adtsea.org/annual-conference.phtml>

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Winter Driving Tip #72



If your car falls through the ice in water deeper than 50 feet, remember to slowly exhale while ascending to avoid getting the bends. Also look for walleyes. If possible note their depth and what they're feeding on.

News from OPI Office of Traffic Education



By Mike Houghton

Greetings All,

As you probably know, in 2005, Congress passed the REAL ID Act which, purportedly implemented additional security standards for states to issue compliant identification, including driver licenses.

Montana has been slow to implement this process and, in fact, rejected the idea during the 2007 legislature, passing a law that prohibited the state from implementing Real ID. This was subsequently reversed in 2017. According to KXLN news, Montana has only a 30% compliance with the Real ID regulations.

After the federal government issued several extensions that allowed Montana residents to use their non-compliant IDs, we have finally reached the proverbial "end-of-the-road" with those. As of May 7, 2025, a Real ID will be required in order to access certain federal facilities, flying on federally regulated aircraft (all commercial air), and entering nuclear power plants. Individuals can still use alternative forms of compliant identification, such as a current passport or a passport card to board flights.

Since we are involved with students getting their licenses, this seems to be a good time to make clear to our students, as well as their parents and guardians, what they can expect. MVD has a clear checklist that can be printed and posted or handed out. That link can be found at mydmt.gov/real-id/ and clicking the "Download the REAL ID Checklist" button at the bottom of that page.

I urge you to look at the requirements found on that page and to share/discuss the information with your students.



Christy Bortz from Kalispell decorated the floor leading to her classroom to help teach students Right of Way. What a great idea!



MTEA Conference Overall Thoughts

By Daniel Williams

I went through the traffic education program back in 2021 in Havre and was terrified to embark on the adventure. The fear wasn't so much for the work, it was the thought of riding with minimally experienced drivers. My first session happened that fall when school started and I was doing class at 7:00 am with drives happening after school. This made for some super long days. The first opportunity for me to attend the MTEA conference could not have come quick enough. My school signed me up, provided transportation, and was eager for me to continue honing my skills as an instructor. At this particular point, the only thing I had going for me was the years of sports coaching experience.

Like most new experiences, I was terrified of a conference, especially a traffic ed conference. What I heard and understood about conferences was that they were boring, forced by employers, and a place for people to miss work and get intoxicated. However, I heard from many traffic educators that the MTEA conference is one of the best in the country and people from out of state will attend them because it is that good.

My first time attending the conference was April, 2022 and boy was it overwhelming for me. I do have a personality that allows me to feel comfortable talking to other people, but everything there was just too much. When you get to a conference, the first task is locating where registration is taking place. I was so worried about finding where everything was, I didn't pay attention to the signs that told me where to go. Once I saw a familiar face, we walked into registration together and I felt saved.

The room was huge, as most conference halls are, and that one was magnificent. I was immediately greeted with MTEA swag, paperwork, registration for renewal units or college credits, and it felt like a lot. There were beginning activities that I was able to jump into and start getting some stamps on my attendance card. All of this happened in the first 5 minutes of being on site. Once I sat down and started going through the bag, wiped the sweat from my brow, settled down, and took a drink of water, I started to feel okay. I then saw someone who seemed lost and overwhelmed, so I went over and made a friend. I don't remember who they were because it was a lot for the first day, but we got through it all together.

Once the opening keynote speaker began and got into his presentation, I realized something unique about his topic. I realized that he wasn't speaking only to traffic ed instruction, it was applicable to my relationship with my wife and family. It had applications to my sports teams, church groups, and most areas of my life. The title of the presentation was, "Helping Fellow Teachers Avoid Burnout & Increase Student Engagement", by Chase Mielke. I locked in on what he had to say and it was wonderful information. I was excited to see he was speaking to our group a couple of times.

Don't get me wrong, there were some great breakouts about traffic education, how to speak with students, communicate with parents/guardians, and become better instructors. We had opportunities to break out with peers to share our teaching techniques, ask questions, express concerns, ask for help, and share stories. This conference was shaping up to be something like I have never experienced before and I was grateful to be part of it. The best part of all of these breakouts, speakers, and camaraderie was that no one had all the answers. No one talked over anyone, there was no superiority, and everyone was open to listening to everyone. The veteran teachers had great strategies they shared and also gave us newcomers opportunities to provide insight as well.

To conclude my first year experience, this conference is more than what anyone thinks it is. There is a lot of information for traffic ed instructors and if you can look outside of that box, you will see that a lot of information applies to teaching, coaching, and personal relationships. When you get the opportunity to attend one of these conferences, take it. I forgot one of the best parts of the conference. There is free food, door prizes (no purchase necessary), and some amazing silent auction items.



Outstanding Traffic Education Teacher of the Year Award

Since 1988, MTEA has routinely honored an outstanding Traffic Education teacher with an annual Teacher of the Year (TOY) award presented at MTEA's spring conference. Any active teacher who has devoted a good part of their teaching career to traffic education is eligible to apply for the award. Teachers can self-nominate or be nominated by someone who is familiar with their traffic education work. The deadline for the nomination form is March 1st, so don't delay!

Download the two-page nomination form (which includes a section that is completed by the candidate) through the MTEA website at mteaonline.org. Members of the selection committee will then review the application. Questions? Contact Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, by leaving a message on the MTEA website (mteaonline.org).

Outstanding Traffic Education Contributor of the Year Award

MTEA recognizes companies, organizations, and individuals who make generous contributions of their time, energy, equipment and/or expertise to support and sustain the mission of the MTEA. To nominate a person or business for this honor, download the COY nomination form at mteaonline.org and submit to MTEA by the March 1st deadline. Members of the selection committee will then review the application.

The Outstanding Contributor/Sustainer of the Year will be recognized at MTEA's spring conference in April. Examples of outstanding contributors or sustainers are MVD driver examiners who have gone out of their way to assist driver education teachers with their CDTP requirements and needs; car dealerships who have loaned vehicles to local school districts for their traffic education programs, and local experts who have visited driver education classes to share their knowledge about various topics such as tire safety, distracted driving, or DUI prevention; as well as business development organizations that have funded materials, equipment and learning tools for your TE program. Questions? Contact Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, by leaving a message on the MTEA website (mteaonline.org).

Retiring from teaching TE?

If you are retiring from education / TE and have been an active MTEA member, we would like to honor you at the upcoming spring conference. In order to be recognized, please contact Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, at 406-278-7856 or reply with a request on the MTEA website (mteaonline.org) with any questions and to receive the "Service Award" application form.

Interested in MTEA Leadership?

The strength and future of any service organization rests in the active involvement of its' membership. Through that membership, the opportunity for leadership often arises. Are you ready for the challenge and interested in getting more involved with MTEA? Are you willing to give a time commitment to make your profession better and grow as an educator? Then consider an appointment to serve as an at-large member to the Executive Board. Nominations will be taken during the classification meetings at the spring conference for those willing to seriously get involved. If you would like more information concerning this role, contact Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, at 406-278-7856 by the time the conference arrives.



MONTANA TRAFFIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE

Simply Driving: Complexities To Basics

Great Falls, Montana ~ April 27-29, 2025



The Montana Traffic Education Association and Montana Office of Public Instruction invite you to the
2025 Montana Traffic Education Conference

The 2025 conference will focus on the resources available to take the complex skill of teaching novice drivers and break it down into its most fundamental steps. Workshops on traffic laws, legal responsibilities, scope of duty, vehicle equipment & maintenance, record keeping, in-car cameras, driving & traffic strategies, railroad grade crossings, teacher roundtable discussions, using classroom technology, Huff Symposium teacher panel, MVD updates, OPI updates, classification meetings, and more!

PRE-REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE: All attendees **must pre-register with MTEA by Thursday, April 10, 2025**. The registration fee is \$215 and includes five meals. Complete the registration form below, detach, and mail to MTEA along with a check for \$215 (sorry, no credit card option at this point). **Walk-in registrations are not accepted.** **Cancellation policy:** Upon prior written notice of cancellation before the conference, \$135 of the \$215 registration fee is refundable. No refunds after the conference.

BOOK YOUR HOTEL: The conference takes place at the **Heritage Inn**, 1700 Fox Farm Road, in Great Falls. Rates are \$109.00 (plus tax) for a single or double room, based on availability. Attendees will need a credit card to secure a room. Call the **Heritage Inn at (406) 761-1900** and mention the group name (Montana Traffic Education 2025) to get the special rate. Cut-off for the group rate is **April 14**, so reserve early!

COLLEGE CREDIT OR RENEWAL UNITS: Register for one semester credit through MSU-N beginning at 10:00 am on Sunday, April 27. The cost is \$200. You can alternatively choose to earn up to 15 renewal units which can be used toward your Montana educator license renewal. **You may register for college credit OR renewal units, but NOT both.**

SCHEDULE/AGENDA: Complete registration packets will be available beginning at 10:00 am on Sunday, April 27. Pre-conference activities available during registration. The first general session will begin at noon. The conference ends at 1:00 pm on Tuesday, April 29. **Conference agenda and other updates will be posted at MTEAOnline.org.**

Please write clearly on the form below and send with payment to MTEA.



2025 Montana Traffic Education Conference Registration

HERITAGE INN

April 27-29, 2025 - Great Falls, Montana

You must pre-register to attend.

MUST PRE-REGISTER BY APRIL 10, 2025

Please bring an item to give as a door prize!

Name (for name badge) _____

Home Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP Code _____

E-mail _____

Telephone (Cell) _____ (Home) _____ (Work) _____

School(s) where you teach _____

____ I would like to register for the MTEA conference and join/renew my membership in MTEA. Enclosed is a check to **MTEA** for **\$215**.

____ I am unable to attend this year's conference, but I want to join/renew my MTEA membership and receive MTEA's newsletter. Enclosed is a check to **MTEA** for **\$45**.

- MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: **MONTANA TRAFFIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION** or **MTEA**
- MAIL TO: **MTEA, PO Box 637, Conrad, MT 59425**
- QUESTIONS? Call Jim Carroll at **(406) 278-3285** (days) or **(406) 278-7856** (evenings)

MTEA USE ONLY

Date _____

Check No. _____

Received check from:

Amount \$ _____

The conference registration fee does not include the college credit fee. The cost for the one semester hour of credit is \$200 and must be paid to MSU-N at the conference.



Montana Traffic Education Association

PO Box 637

Conrad, MT 59425

Return Service Requested



2025 Montana Traffic Education Conference

April 27-29 - Great Falls Heritage Inn

Look for more detailed conference agenda information coming soon on the MTEA website at www.mteaonline.org.

The 2025 ADTSEA national conference will be held July 20-23 in Billings, Montana! This is a great opportunity to see what is happening on the national level in regard to traffic education and an opportunity to network



with other professionals from across the United States. MTEA is looking for people to help with some of the on-site logistics. If you plan to attend and are willing to help in any capacity, send an e-mail on the MTEA webpage (mteaonline.org). Look for more information about agenda and

registration materials on the ADTSEA website at www.adtsea.org. Even if you can't attend, at least consider joining your national organization.