

SOFT – “Save Our Fellow Traveler” Project

Kerala police with an objective of reducing accidents on the road and to build a safer driving culture on the roads, has launched a multi-sectoral, multi-discipline and multifaceted action oriented programme named “**Subhayathra**” integrating diverse elements viz. conducting various traffic awareness programme, efficient enforcement pertaining to traffic rules, regulations and laws with the aid of most modern digital equipment, prevention of accidents, immediate attention to victims of road accidents, and ensuring safe travel on all roads. One of the unique Projects envisaged under this programme is the formation of SOFT (Save Our Fellow Traveler) Groups-which is a self help group for immediate trauma care for accident victims.

Objectives

The Objective of the formation of SOFT is to reduce fatality rate of accident victims, by giving required medical assistance and to arrange to transport them safely to the nearby hospital. Immediate attention given to the road accident victims increases the chances of survival manifold and reduces the severity of injuries. Many death and disabilities, due to impact of injuries can be prevented with immediate medical attention. It has been noted that people are afraid of helping the traffic accident victims because of the apparent fear of becoming witness in the court, fear to face questions from the police and hospital authorities, fear of facing Civil or criminal liability etc. Even though people come forward to help them, it is not always possible that proper medical care reaches the victim quickly. The onlookers and other people who are the first responders can provide the first aid to the serious victims and this improper handling of the victim can worsen the situation.

The presence of adequately trained work force team is highly essential to tackle the above situation. The immediate care and medical attention rendered by the trained force team, helps to take accident victims safely to the hospital and also increase the chances of survival and reduce fatality. In Kerala there is no such comprehensive trained group working effectively to deal with accident situations. At this juncture the formation of a volunteer force to attend the accident victims is very significant. Through this project, it is envisaged to develop trained volunteer force acting without fear, to save the life of an accident victim. In addition, training imparted through this program will boost the confident of SOFT Group members and also enable them to provide proper first aid to the accident victims. The SOFT members can work voluntarily to be present at the accident scene, save road accident victims and also do proper follow up in legal support etc. The trained SOFT volunteers who are ordinarily available on the road side will attend emergency issue associated with traffic accidents. Hence utmost care and scientific approach is essential for selecting them. Most of the SOFT group members should in one way or other available on the premises of the road. They may be selected from persons, who are willing, who have inclination to serve society, who are of good character and who are ordinarily available on the road side (eg.

Autorickshaw/taxi drivers, Shop Keepers with shop on the roads, NGOs, other student groups, Head load workers, public whose house is located on the roads and highways etc.)

SOFT Group

One SOFT Group will consists of 50 members, and this will be selected from the Police stations within the jurisdiction of an Inspector of Police. The soft group members will be selected from the above group who voluntarily come forward and are interested in joining the team. The selection should be after assessing their enthusiasm and the attitude of the individual and also after checking the character and antecedents to the satisfaction of the selection team. The minimum qualification expected is 10th standard. The selection, following a set procedure, will be done by a committee constituted for the purpose with Inspector of Police (I o P) as the Chairman and those nominated by concerned (I o P).

Administration and Control of SOFT Group Members

The overall command and control of the volunteers will be with the Inspector of Police. The details of the volunteers will be maintained with I o P and in the concerned Police Stations and this list will be publicized among other emergency service agencies. A meeting of the volunteers will be held in Police Station once in a month and once in three months the I o P will review the performance and to address issues if any. A format will be developed by the CIs to enter the details of the volunteer services extended to the accident victims by the volunteers. In order to identify the volunteer during emergency each volunteer will be given a water proof jacket carrying appropriate logo.

Training

a)Methodology

The Trauma Care training is a One Day program from 9AM - 5 PM. The Training Module is given below. The training will be through power point presentations with interactive participation followed by practical sessions and demos. The trainees will be issued with booklets on Basic Road Safety, First Aid, Basic Life Support and Trauma Care, Safe Shifting to Hospital etc. Notes on the relevant portion of the Hon'ble Supreme Court judgment in SC 2039 AIR 1989 in regard to the responsibilities on the part of the hospital authorities etc and the Circulars issued in this connection by State Police Chief on the legal protection available to those public volunteering to help the accident victims will also be given to the volunteers. Apart from the above, a Directory with details of the emergency services, other volunteers, Police, Fire and Rescue Services officials, Ambulance Services etc will also issued to the volunteers. Post Training

assessment will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of training and also to evaluate the marks scored by the volunteers. Successful trainees will be issued with a Certificate and Identity Card. Every year, One Day refresher course has to be arranged for developing the skill and knowledge of the volunteers at IoP level.

Conclusion.

This project proposal focuses on reducing the trauma stage of the accident victims thereby enhancing the chances of getting better medical attention and also ensures safe and secure transportation to the hospitals by trained and dedicated volunteers who work under the cover of a legal framework.

The formation of SOFT group will be started in Thiruvananthapuram, as a Pilot project and then extended through out the State. The Circle Inspectors of Thiruvananthapuram city and Rural will form SOFT groups with 50 volunteers each. We call for nominations from suitable and willing volunteers who want to become a part of the SOFT Volunteer Team to register themselves with the concerned Circle Inspector with immediate effect. The last date for sending your nomination is 10th of August, after which a Selection process will be conducted and the selected volunteers would be put to a one day training. They will then be a part of the SOFT project, which will entitle them to a certificate, a jacket and badge. It is reiterated that the project is totally voluntary and does not entitle the volunteer to any monetary payments. We call upon all the citizens to partner us in making the roads more safer for the travelling public.

Manoj Abraham IPS

Inspector General of Police

Traffic and Road Safety