

# ACTAR NEWS

*Summer - Fall 1997*

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## **The ACTAR Administrative Office has Moved**

Effective July 1, 1997, the administrative operations of ACTAR officially moved from Denver, Colorado to Hudson, Florida. Concurrent with this move, Mr. Albert Baxter has accepted the position of office Administrator. Al will be assuming the responsibilities from Sue McDaniel who reluctantly resigned the position to pursue other goals. Al's introduction appears later in this issue. All correspondences and inquiries to ACTAR should be addressed to: Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction PO Box 5436 Hudson, FL 34674-5436 The new WATS telephone number with voice mail: 1-800-809-3818 local 813-869-6159 Al Baxter can be reached directly via fax at: 813-869-2147 or E-mail: [atbaxter@akos.net](mailto:atbaxter@akos.net) The Denver telephone number and post office box will remain in service for an interim period to accommodate a smooth transition of all administrative functions.

## **ACTAR On-Line - The Web Site is Up and Running**

The ACTAR Web site is now up and running. Much thanks is owed to Al Baxter, Stan Oglesby and Central Missouri State University regarding the tasks of creating and maintaining the site. The site provides (or will soon provide) users an introduction to ACTAR and the participating organizations, CEU and renewal information, application forms and test site locations, frequently asked questions (FAQ), the directory and links to other related web sites. The ACTAR web site can be accessed at:

*<http://www.safetycenter.cmsu.edu/ACTAR/actar.htm>*

## **Board of Directors Meeting April 5-6, 1997**

The ACTAR Governing Board of Directors met in Philadelphia, PA, during the weekend of April 5-6, 1997. The agenda covered many topics. All participating organizations were represented. As a brief outline, the following topics were covered:

- Transfer of the administrative office
- CEU status and accreditation renewals
- ACTAR tax status
- ACTAR logo trademark application
- Fund raising and advertising
- Directory
- Accreditation Exam and Study Guide
- Web site
- Election of GBOD Officers
- Academics related to accident reconstruction

Many of these topic areas are on-going and involve the continuous oversight by a member or members of the GBOD. The status of these items is reviewed in this issue of the newsletter. Should anyone desire to inquire or comment on any matter pertaining to ACTAR, please contact any member of the GBOD.

## **GBOD Elections**

By unanimous vote of the GBOD, the incumbent Officers retained their positions. Serving another term are Charles Sulzbach as Chairman and Executive Officer, Richard Chapman as Vice-Chairman and Arnold Wheat as Secretary and Treasurer.

### **Message from the Chair - Charles Sulzbach -**

Our long time office administrator, Suzan McDaniel, has passed the scepter to Al Baxter. Sue has been a long time driving force with the ACTAR program giving countless hours of her time to keep things rolling smoothly. Her efforts will be missed, but not forgotten. Al can be reached by phone at 1-800-809-3818 and e-mail: [atbaxter@akos.net](mailto:atbaxter@akos.net).

John Ruller, president of the Australian and South Pacific Association of Collision Investigators, has proposed at their next seminar to discuss the question "Is there a need of some form of accreditation of traffic accident investigators and reconstructionists?" Anyone with any thoughts or comments on the subject of how John can gain support for the accreditation program can e-mail them to John Ruller via Craig Hodge at [<craig@novanet.net.au>](mailto:craig@novanet.net.au)

Stan Oglesby, from Central Missouri State University, has proposed a seminar for all accredited members. The university is interested in putting on a three-day ACTAR conference in Branson, Missouri in April. The conference would be limited to ACTAR accredited individuals and those in the process or who have made application. Would you be interested in attending? Please contact Stan directly with any feedback by fax at 816-463-7161 or e-mail at: [<sogelsby@almanet.net>](mailto:sogelsby@almanet.net)

We are continuing to work toward a degree program. The committee is comprised of Joe Montgomery (Chair/TAARS), Donald Basham (ASSE), Steve Benanti (IAARS), Bill Brandt (MSP) and Stan Oglesby (CMSU). Direct all questions and suggestions to Joe Montgomery's e-mail: [<lsmontgo@teexnet.tamu.edu>](mailto:lsmontgo@teexnet.tamu.edu)

I would like to remind everyone to be aware of CEU renewals, those certified in 1992 and 1993 are approaching their renewal dates. Seminars are a great place to gain CEUs and insight from fellow accident reconstructionists. NATARI, NJAAR, NAPARS and MATAI are jointly hosting a conference in Atlantic City on October 1,2 and 3. Some topics include: Child restraints, low speed impact and tire forensics. This seminar has been pre-approved for 23 CEUs.

Remember to keep promoting ACTAR by including your accreditation on all reports or even on your letterhead and advertising material. Any comments, concerns or ideas concerning ACTAR please direct to your local representative.

### **A Message from the Administrator - Al Baxter -**

Greetings to accredited accident reconstructionists and those undergoing the testing process. For many of you reading this edition of ACTAR News, let me introduce myself. My name is Al Baxter and on July 1, 1997, I took over the day-to-day administration of the ACTAR program. First, let me thank my

predecessor, Sue McDaniels who has done a terrific job handling the operations of ACTAR since its inception. Sue has done a great job laying the ground work to make this job a lot easier.

I recently retired from the Philadelphia Police Department with the rank of Lieutenant. During my time with the department I spent over twenty years as an investigator and supervisor in the Accident Investigation Division. I have held several offices in the National Association of Traffic Accident Reconstructionists and Investigators (NATARI), and was the newsletter editor for over ten years. I am also a member of the Society of Accident Reconstructionists (SOAR) and the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). I currently have started Suncoast Collision Analysis, a consulting firm. Like many of you, I signed up and completed the long-term accreditation examination several years ago. I took this examination as a test to determine my skills in the field of accident reconstruction and for the satisfaction of knowing I completed an examination developed by my peers. I suspect that those who have subjected themselves to this grueling examination also have a sense of pride and accomplishment. This is where I need your help.

One of the short term goals I chose when taking on this position was to "get the word out" about ACTAR. One way was to prepare a web site for the Internet. The site is now up and running with assistance of Central Missouri State University, one of our participating organizations. I also had invaluable help from Bob Cole at CATAIR and Bill Wright at TARO. The web site is one of the basic ways to let the rest of the world know we exist.

Another method will be the development of a brochure, explaining what ACTAR is and how it can help the legal community. Finally, with your help, I need to let the legal and insurance communities (our customers) know we exist and what our abilities are to assist them. I need local bar addresses and contacts within the insurance industry from you to send them information about ACTAR. We have already started making some inroads by distributing copies of the ACTAR Directory to various legal entities.

You have worked hard and have been successful by completing the examination process. You continue to show your involvement in the process by obtaining Continuing Educational Units. ACTAR needs every reconstructionist to be involved in getting the word out about ACTAR. Can I count on your support?

Suggestions, comments and feedback will help your Board of Governing Directors guide ACTAR into the next century. For assistance or inquiries, I can be reached via the toll-free telephone number, mailing address or by e-mail at: <atbaxter@imsweb.net>. I look forward to hearing from you.

### **ACTAR Logo and Seal to be Trademarked**

The Commission has filed a trademark application to have the ACTAR title, logo, acronym and seal registered for proprietary use by the Commission. Gary Vencill (NAPARS) has been spearheading the process. Gary reported to the Board that the process is proceeding smoothly and has reached the point where "TM" can be applied to the ACTAR logo and seal indicating the trademark process. He anticipates final approval of the registration application in the near future.

The trademarking of the ACTAR logo and seal will insure that the Commission has oversight as to how ACTAR is marketed. No restrictions regarding the personal use of the ACTAR logo or seal by accredited individuals are in place. Accredited individuals are encouraged to use the logo and seal in all their dealings associated with their accreditation. The mass marketing of merchandise for profit, particularly by individuals or entities not accredited, MUST receive the approval of the GBOD.

The GBOD decided not to enter directly into any merchandising. Should another entity wish to manufacture or sell merchandise bearing the ACTAR title, logo or seal, the GBOD will decide whether a percentage of the proceeds should go to the Commission.

### **Directory -Reprint due in 1998 -**

The second printing of the ACTAR Directory is scheduled for February of 1998. Although in excess of 18 months will have passed since the first printing in 1996, the Board desired to institute the annual reprinting by calendar year. As a result, the 1998 printing will include all individuals accredited through December 31, 1997.

A few changes are in store for the second edition. Some enhancements will be made to the font size, spacing and page layout. A listing of individuals by geographical location will also be included. It was determined that a geographic listing would enhance the Directory's viability as an advertising source for accredited persons. The Board determined that it was cost prohibitive to include photographs in the Directory for the foreseeable future. The goal is to provide an up-to-date directory of all accredited individuals and to insure that the cost of that directory is reasonable.

All individuals who received accreditation after the 1996 edition was printed will receive a copy of the 1998 edition free of charge. Additionally, gratis copies will be available for distribution to courts, bar associations or other institutions which can promote ACTAR as a whole. Individuals who received a gratis copy of the 1996 edition will have to purchase the 1998 edition. The price will be established as the Directory goes to press. All accredited individuals will, however, receive a free copy of the geographic listing.

Please note, if anyone desires to have the information contained in the 1996 Directory corrected, added or deleted, send this information to Al Baxter at the administrative office. E-mail addresses and web site information is also encouraged. Copies of the first printing are still available - contact the administrative office for additional information.

An electronic version of the Directory is presently under construction for the ACTAR web site.

### **Cost of Renewal to Increase in 1999 -Administrative Costs Increase-**

ACTAR has always attempted to keep the cost of accreditation reasonable. To date the cost incurred by individuals undertaking the accreditation process has remained unchanged since ACTAR's inception. The cost associated with administering the accreditation program (i.e., postage, materials and other services) has, however, increased. Following a lengthy debate, the Board determined that some of the increase in operational costs had to be passed along. As a result, effective January 1, 1999, an administrative fee of \$1.00 per pre-approved CEU will be imposed at the time of accreditation renewal.

The fee is applicable only to pre-approved CEUs. All other fees, including the \$3.00 fee for CEUs not pre-approved, remain unchanged.

This increase means that individuals who renew their accreditation after January 1, 1999, will pay up to an additional \$80. Despite this increase, the acquisition of CEUs from pre-approved courses and conferences is still the least expensive method to accumulate CEUs. Accredited individuals are encouraged to renew early.

When compared with other accrediting entities, ACTAR remains relatively inexpensive.

### **Accreditation Exams and Study Guide**

The testing process was discussed at length during the April Board meeting. The database of questions for the theory portion of the accreditation exam has been expanded thereby enabling a greater variety for the theory portion of the exam. To expand the practical portion of the exam, additional crash tests have been conducted and more are scheduled during the coming year.

The study guide supplied with the initial test application is being reviewed for possible changes. The study guide provided by ACTAR is designed to introduce the accreditation candidate to the testing procedure and not serve as a review for material likely to found in the exam.

Exam preparatory sessions are available through many of the participating organizations, often in conjunction with scheduled ACTAR exams. The Board reiterated that members of the GBOD and alternates are ineligible to participate in any exam preparation classes or study sessions.

Other areas of discussion regarding the testing procedure resulted in a few changes. Candidates taking the exam will be required to produce photo ID before being admitted to the test site. Additionally, to preclude any potential for abuse, greater accountability for all test materials will be implemented.

### **Academics and Accident Reconstruction**

One of ACTAR's goals is to promote the academic requisites necessary for accident reconstruction. ACTAR recognizes the benefit of a well-rounded education to an individual practicing motor vehicle accident reconstruction. ACTAR also recognizes the esoteric nature of the profession and that many of the skills used by reconstructionists are intrinsic to the field of accident reconstruction.

In pursuit of this goal, ACTAR is searching for colleges and universities that may be interested in developing curricula for accident reconstruction as a specific degree or a component of an engineering degree.

ACTAR is also exploring the potential that successful completion of the accreditation exam could serve as an equivalency for an applied physics class at many colleges and universities.

Stan Oglesby, CMSU representative, is requesting feedback from accredited individuals regarding any interest in a two-year associates degree in Traffic Accident Reconstruction. Stan would like our input, either for or against such an initiative. Please contact Stan at Central Missouri State University via E-

mail or fax and express your interest. Stan can be reached at 816-463-7161 (fax) or soglesby@almanet.net (E-mail).

ACTAR is preparing a survey which will be sent to institutions that offer and individuals who complete courses related to accident reconstruction. The survey will focus on the institution's and individual's knowledge of the accreditation program and how they view it. The survey is intended to develop information to assist ACTAR with fulfilling the needs of the accident reconstruction field.

Along these same lines, Joe Montgomery announced that Tarelton State University in Stephenville, Texas will begin accident investigation and reconstruction courses for credit hours toward a Criminal Justice degree (with a minor in accident investigation). The university will begin accepting courses presented by the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) of Texas A&M University beginning with the fall 1997 semester. Successful completion of a TEEX accident investigation or reconstruction course can be translated into credit hours after payment of a fee.

### **Fund Raising and Promoting Accreditation**

At the April board meeting, the GBOD continued to grapple with the tasks of fund raising. As with all businesses and organizations, there are expenses associated with the administration of the accreditation program. Several areas are presently being explored. It was reiterated that ACTAR will not accept donations to which conditions are attached that impact on our autonomy.

We still face the hurdle that involves ACTAR's tax-exempt designation by the IRS. Although designated as a tax-exempt organization, ACTAR does not presently fit within the "community-work" title and, therefore, contributions made to ACTAR may not be tax deductible. We are exploring methods to alleviate this hurdle.

To help spread the word about ACTAR a brochure is being developed. The brochure will be available to organizations and institutions for distribution at conferences, meetings and courses. The brochure is the final stages of development and should be available in late October. Contact the ACTAR administrative office for details or to obtain copies of the brochure for your next conference or training class.

Regarding the issue of advertising, the Board decided that the direct merchandising of material (by the organization) would be neither cost-effective nor promote a professional image. Therefore, ACTAR, as an organization, will not produce or distribute any merchandise.

### **A Note About Ethics**

As a reminder, a violation of the Ethics provision of the ACTAR Bylaws may result in the revocation of accreditation. Allegations of ethics violations must be made to the Chairman of the GBOD in writing. Evidence substantiating the violation must accompany the complaint. The Bylaws define unacceptable conduct as, but not limited to -

- Perjury
- Concealment or destruction of case evidence
- Falsification or deliberate misrepresentation of case evidence

- Willful and wanton misuse of the laws of physics or equations used in reconstruction
- Malicious or false attempts to injure or discredit the professional reputation of another person involved in the field of accident reconstruction
- Acceptance of a case on a contingency fee basis when a vested interest in the outcome of the case will be gained
- Breach of confidentiality

### **Other Information of Interest**

*EXPIRATION of ACCREDITATION* - For those of you who attained accreditation during the fall and winter of 1992, your accreditation is about to expire. Most of you have renewed, however, as of September 6, 1997, ten individuals are to expire as of October 6 and twelve individuals as of November 7. If your accreditation is about to expire, consult with Al Baxter (our administrator) regarding your status. Al can provide you with information regarding CEU status and required fees.

Remember, you may (and are encouraged) to renew your accreditation at any time once you have acquired the necessary 80 CEUs. It is in your best interest to consult with the promoter or presenter of any accident investigation/reconstruction training course or conference as to whether ACTAR CEUs are available. Remind them that the cost of pre-approval is minimum and will save you money at renewal time.

*BYLAWS* - Have any questions regarding the structure or operation of ACTAR? A copy of our bylaws is available upon request. Contact the administrative office.

*WHO NEEDS TO BE ACCREDITED?* As the process of accreditation expands, more businesses and entities associated with the field of accident reconstruction are requiring ACTAR accreditation for individuals employed as reconstructionists. As evidence of this occurrence, an employment announcement found in the January 1997 edition of SAE News Update received mention at the GBOD meeting. Additional mention was also made that several jurisdictions in Pennsylvania and New Jersey require ACTAR accreditation to prosecute cases involving accident reconstruction.

*ACCREDITATION STATS* - As of September 1997, a total of 536 individuals have attained accreditation. At this time there were 85 individuals awaiting testing.

### **ACTAR Exam Dates**

Below is a listing of accreditation exam dates and locations currently scheduled.

- Tuesday, September 30, 1997 - Atlantic City, NJ Held before the NJAAR / MATAI / NATARI / NAPARS conference Registration deadline is September 15, 1997
- Friday, November 7, 1997 - Dayton, OH Contact the ACTAR office for details
- Saturday, November 29, 1997 - Warrensburg, MO Contact the ACTAR office for details
- Sunday, November 30, 1997 - Miami, FL Held before the TEEX Low Speed Impact Course
- Monday, January 12, 1998 - Riverside, CA Held before the Ped/Bike Reconstruction Course at UCX Riverside
- Sunday, April 19, 1998 - Jacksonville, FL Held before the IPTM Special Problems Workshop

- Wednesday, August 26, 1998 - Colorado Springs, CO Joint SOAR/WATAI/TAARS Conference  
Registration deadline is August 5, 1998

Please consider having your organization sponsor an ACTAR exam. Any organization can sponsor an exam, however, at least 10 participants are typically needed to offset the cost of testing. ACTAR is continuously seeking new exam locations and dates.

There is no organizational fee to sponsor an exam. The fee schedule for individuals seeking accreditation is as follows:

- For members of a participating organization -- \$150.00 application fee (due with application) and \$50.00 exam fee (due upon registration for accreditation exam).
- For individuals who are not members of a participating organization -- \$175.00 application fee and \$75.00 exam fee.

Contact the ACTAR administrative office for additional information or to register for an exam.

**MIA - -Please Contact the Administrative Office -**

We have not been able to contact these folks. If anyone knows their whereabouts or has contact with them, please contact the administrative office.

- David J. Shepardson #481
- Charles R. Lewis #193

**Need Info?**

For additional information or to pass along ideas or comments, contact a sponsoring organization's representative or contact the main ACTAR office at: The Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction P.O. Box 5436 Hudson, Florida 34674-5436 (800) 809-3818 (Voice mail) Accessible from Anywhere Internet - [www.safetycenter.cmsu.edu/actar/actar.htm](http://www.safetycenter.cmsu.edu/actar/actar.htm) , E-mail - [atbaxter@akos.net](mailto:atbaxter@akos.net) (administrator)