Because they must often operate vehicles at high speeds and in hazardous conditions, driving skills are critical for law enforcement and emergency personnel.

The League’s Loss Control Division has offered Proactive Driver Training to its AMIC and MWCF members for over 11 years. In April 2000, a state-of-the-art SKIDCAR system was purchased and the League began offering AMIC/MWCF’s Proactive Driver training throughout the state in early 2001.

The Swedish-made, state-of-the-art SKIDCAR System has been shown to instill better driving instincts to help drivers maintain control in the most difficult real-life situations. The SKIDCAR System is specifically designed to aid in the development of techniques that would be risky to learn in a regular vehicle at higher speeds. It consists of a steel framework on electro-hydraulic wheels attached to the suspension of a vehicle that, through the use of an instructor-operated electronic controller, can be adjusted to simulate loss of front, rear or four-wheel grip at low speeds. This means the instructor can create subtle-to-extreme skid conditions at a low speed in a small geographic space.

In October 2011, AMIC/MWCF purchased a new vehicle for its Proactive Driver Program – a state-of-the-art Chevrolet Caprice PPV (Police Patrol Vehicle) built in Australia and especially designed with electronic stabilization.

“This car uses a computer to sense if the driver is yawing to the left or right and then uses the braking system and throttle and steering control to help the driver avoid or overcome a skid,” said Stanley Fant, SKIDCAR Coordinator for AMIC/MWCF. “It gives the driver feedback in order to perform safer driving techniques. The Alabama League of Municipalities is the first organization to use this newly designed vehicle in a SKIDCAR program.”

AMIC/MWCF’s Proactive Driver Training program is offered throughout the state at various times of the year and consists of a day-long session in which a maximum of nine people are trained using the SKIDCAR System. The first hour of the course takes place in a classroom setting. The remainder of the program is hands-on and completed in shifts. Three participants ride in the vehicle (one driving, two in the back seat) with the instructor while the remaining six observe how the vehicle responds and help maintain the training course.

Fant, who is responsible for AMIC/MWCF’s Proactive Driver Training program, has 30 years of law enforcement experience as an Alabama State Trooper, including more than 20 years as a highway patrol officer and supervisor. He retired in May 1999 and began working with AMIC/MWCF’s Proactive Driver Training program in December 2000.

Although the Proactive Driver Training program was originally designed for law enforcement employees, ALL municipal employees are strongly encouraged to complete the program for their own driving safety. AMIC/MWCF’s goal is to provide as many drivers as possible with the techniques and skills to safely overcome adverse driving situations they might encounter on a day-to-day basis.

For more information on AMIC/MWCF’s Proactive Driver Training program, contact Donna Wagner, Loss Control Coordinator, at 334-262-2566 or via email at donnaw@alalm.org.