

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers April 11, 2006

Michigan News:

Michigan Center for Truck Safety Truck Simulator Partnership

The Michigan Center for Truck Safety (MCTS) continues to be the leader in transportation safety locally and nationally, bringing the most innovative truck safety technology to Michigan. The Michigan Truck Safety Commission recently gave its approval to move forward on an exciting project that will provide the trucking industry with a mobile truck driving simulator to help commercial drivers improve their skills in a safe, controlled environment. The MCTS is seeking safety partnerships for in-kind, logistical and/or financial assistance. To discuss these opportunities further, the MCTS will be hosting a luncheon taking place at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 4, 2006, at the Best Western Midway Hotel located at 7711 West Saginaw, Lansing, MI 48917. In order to register and attend the luncheon please contact Mike Irwin, Executive Director of the MCTS at (517) 321-1955, ext. 12 or e-mail Mike at mirwin@truckingsafety.org.

NETS Feature

Safe Driving is Everyone's Responsibility

A recent "health check" of UK fleets found that while many are implementing proper risk management policies, others could still be held accountable for at-work drivers involved in a crash. Meanwhile, other research has found that decision-making powers are being taken away from fleet managers and becoming the responsibility of human resource and finance professionals. And further research suggests that safe driving is the responsibility of the drivers themselves. Leaving the question: Who is responsible for ensuring safety behind the wheel?

...More http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/040106_responsibilityfeat.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Nissan Unveils New Safety Technology

Nissan has developed a new safety feature that causes a car's gas pedal to lift by itself to alert the driver of a possible collision. The new technology combines radar sensors and a computer system to judge a car's speed and the distance to the vehicle in front. When the car senses a possible head-on crash, the gas pedal automatically rises against the driver's foot as a signal to step on the brake. Read the full article at http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/060314/japan_magic_bumper.html?.v=7

States Urged To Implement Primary Seat Belt Laws

Belt use reached a record high of 82 percent last year, but the government and auto safety groups are still pushing for stronger enforcement to reduce the roughly 42,000 people killed in traffic crashes every year. Twenty-four states have primary seat belt enforcement laws. Others have bills pending amid concerns about auto safety, mounting health care bills for people injured in traffic crashes and new federal grant money available to states with such laws. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060304/AUTO01/603040338/1148/AUTO01> .

Technology To Put The Brakes On Red Light Running

Believe it or not the chances of getting caught speeding or running a red light are very low. However, new technologies could make detection a near certainty and issue tickets automatically—with escalating fines the more often you're caught. Read the full article at <http://www.its.umn.edu/news/2006/reducefatalities.html>

Reports Prescription Sleep Aid Used While Behind The Wheel

Following a recent article that appeared in the New York Times much attention has been given the side effects attributed to the sleep medication, Ambien. Information presented at a meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences stated that Ambien had been found in blood samples of drivers in a number of states; in some case reports the blood levels were so elevated that it suggested willful overdosing. Other case studies found that people are taking it with alcohol, with other sedating or psychiatric medications, not when they intended to be in bed, or not allowing enough time before resuming activities or driving. It was also suggested that some people might be driving in an amnesic state possibly caused by the medication itself.

CDC: Highway Crashes Major Cause Of Brain Injury

One of the most serious injuries an individual can suffer is traumatic brain injury (TBI). A new study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it is a leading cause of death and disability in the United States. The new report also says that one of the leading causes of TBI is motor vehicle crashes—with incidents including drivers and passengers, as well as motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

National Sleep Awareness Week – March 27

The National Sleep Foundation's 9th annual National Sleep Awareness Week (NSAW) began on March 27th. The campaign is dedicated to public education, information and awareness about sleep, and sleep disorders. This year's theme is "Sleep: As Important as Diet and Exercise (Only Easier!)." NSAW is a great time to get involved in events in your community and to make a year-round pledge to making sleep a priority. For more information visit www.sleepfoundation.org.

Seat Belt Use Among Truckers Improving

Seat belt usage among truck drivers is steadily improving, but the industry still has a long way to go, according to a recent report by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). According to the FMCSA, most fatal crashes involving truck drivers are the result of trucks running off the road, rolling over, or hitting a large stationary object. Many of the drivers killed in these types of crashes died because they failed to wear their shoulder belts.

Report: States' Traffic Safety Efforts Are Lagging

According to a recent report by the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, states are lagging in their efforts to adopt road safety measures that could save thousands of lives each year. The report found that states and the District of Columbia have made little progress in adopting 14 essential laws to reduce the number of highway crashes on the nation's roads. Such crashes are the number-one killer of Americans ages 4-34, resulting in more than 42,000 yearly deaths and 3 million injuries. For more information visit

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?SMContentIndex=15&SMContentSet=0>

Two Leading Safety Groups Address Speed-Related Roadway Deaths

The executive board of the Governors Highway Safety Association recently met with the president of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) to address speed-related roadway deaths. AASHTO and other safety groups believe that addressing speed-related

deaths could have a major impact on reducing fatalities on U.S. roadways. Speed-related deaths currently account for one-third of all traffic fatalities.



Project Lap Top Injures Passenger

A Kansas man suffered brain injury after his laptop computer hit him in the head during a motor vehicle crash. He was sitting in the passenger seat when the vehicle's driver lost control and was struck by a semi-trailer, sending an unsecured laptop in the backseat flying into the front of the vehicle. The crash illustrates a new concern among fleets, since many fleet drivers keep their laptops in the back seat of their vehicle.

Nader To Make Comeback

Ralph Nader, longtime consumer advocate and former presidential candidate is returning to his roots as a government watchdog. Nader contends the auto industry has failed to push technology that could make vehicles safer, cleaner and more fuel-efficient. He wants to open an office in Detroit to monitor the industry that helped propel him to fame in the 1960s. Read the full article at http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/business/1310AP_Nader_Auto_Safety.html.

Survey: 57 Percent Of Drivers Fail To Use Turn Signals

A new national survey found that 57 percent of American drivers admit they don't use their turn signal when changing lanes. According to the survey responses, 42 percent of those drivers say they don't have enough time and 23 percent admit they are just plain "lazy." The study also identified several driver-types prone to ignoring turn signals— including impulsive, lazy, and forgetful. Read the release at http://www.responseinsurance.com/about_response/press_releases/turn_signals.as

Study Tests Cell Phone Use And Driver Workload

A new study examined drivers' on-road workload and traffic safety. The study emphasized the effects of cellular phone communication on driving performance. It found that when drivers were faced with heavy traffic, a greater safety margin was typically adopted, with lowered driving speeds and restricted phone use. The study concluded that there is a general trade-off between tasks to preserve driving safety. Authors: B.S Liu and Y.H. Lee Source: Journal of Safety Resolution

News from the USDOT :

FMCSA: Should Belt Use On The Rise Among Commercial Drivers

The U.S. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) released data on shoulder belt usage that indicates about 54% of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers were using their shoulder belts in 2005, compared with 48% in 2002. According to FMCSA, drivers of passenger cars (83%), SUVs/vans (85%), and pickup trucks (73%) all have significantly higher usage rates. For more information visit <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/safety-initiatives/safety-belt/exec-summary-2005.htm> .

FMCSA: Driver Behavior, Not Roadway Conditions Cause Of Crashes

While previous studies have focused on specific crashes and their individual causes, a new study by FMCSA became the first nationwide examination of all pre-crash factors. It found that drivers of large trucks and other vehicles involved in truck crashes are ten times more likely to be the cause of the crash than other factors, such as weather, road conditions, and vehicle performance. Read the release at <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/news/news-releases/2006/032406.htm>.

International Traffic Safety News:

EU Issues Universal European Driver's License

The European Council of Ministers approved a common European driving license. The new license will facilitate the free movement of European Union drivers, prevent fraud when driving licenses are used as identification documents, and improve road safety. A single model in credit card format will replace the more than 110 different models currently in circulation. For more information visit <http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/381&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

UK Study Address Speeding, Behaviors

The U.K. Department for Transport has released a new report Road Safety Research Report entitled Effective Interventions for Speeding Motorists. It examines components of interventions that are most likely to change speeding driver behavior. The report includes a list of components that national speed awareness schemes could include, and how such schemes could be evaluated. View the report at http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_rdsafety/documents/page/dft_rdsafety_611335.pdf.

Europe Pushes For Smart Car Technology

The European Commission is encouraging the implementation of smart car technology, such as features that will automatically keep cars at a safe distance. The move towards more safety features is part of the plan to reduce the European Union's traffic death toll by half by the year 2010. There are an estimated 1.4 million crashes on EU roads each year, claiming more than 40,000 lives. An estimated 93 percent of crashes are caused by human error.

UK Safety Group Issues Safety Checklist For Break Downs

The UK's AA Business Services issued a checklist for fleets to protect their employees' personal safety if they break down. According to the organization a quarter of all breakdowns take place in inner-city areas, with 27 percent of incidents happening at night. The checklist includes:

- Ensure mobile phone is fully charged
- Stop somewhere well-lit
- Switch on the hazard warning lights
- Do not wander down unfamiliar back streets
- Lock the car doors and hide valuable items away
- If someone tries to break into the car, sound the horn

Study Examines Effectiveness Of Electronic Stability Control

Electronic Stability Control (ESC) was introduced on the mass market in 1998. Since then, several studies have shown the positive effects of ESC. A new study examined crash data from Sweden during 1998 to 2004. The effectiveness of ESC was analyzed for different road conditions, and some crash types and injury levels. In its conclusion, the study found ESC to have reduced crashes resulting in injuries, especially serious and fatal injuries.

Authors: A. Lie, C. Tingvall, M. Krafft, A. Kullgren Source: Traffic Injury Prevention