

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers August 17, 2004

NETS Feature

Michigan NETS Supports State Wide Safety Belt Mobilization Are Your Employees Buckled Up, Every Trip, Every Time?

Hundreds of law enforcement agencies throughout Michigan will focus on unbuckled motorists during the upcoming Labor Day holiday in an effort to motivate motorists to wear their safety belts, every trip, every time. The Click it or Ticket, Buckle Up or Pay Up law enforcement campaign takes place August 30 through September 12, 2004.

The Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning has developed several promotional items to assist you in promoting the August 30- September 12 safety belt mobilizations.

- Posters, payroll check stuffers, banners and other items are available for your use, FREE of charge from the Michigan Resource Center.
- All new "Buckle Up" parking lot/side walk stencil is now available. Paint and stencil are provided free of charge.
- We also ask for your support in displaying a "Buckle Up" message on any available marquee or reader board at your business or organization.
- To take it a step further, an easy way you can help save lives is to use your organization's internet site to spread the campaign message. Please consider adding a link to the Office of Highway Safety Planning's web site, <http://www.michigan.gov/ohsp>

Take just a minute to call the Michigan Resource Center toll free 1-800-626-4636 and order materials today to promote this important campaign.

Are your commercial drivers buckling up?

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation only 48 percent of professional drivers wear their safety belts when operating commercial vehicles. Not only is this a risk in terms of liability for company owners, but it could also increase vehicle and health insurance costs if a driver is injured in a company vehicle.

The Michigan Center for Truck Safety, www.truckingsafety.org is trying to get the message to the trucking industry that not enough drivers are making use of safety belts. Moreover, the Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Division is out in force this summer, "reminding" drivers operating vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating over 10,000 lbs. that they are required to wear safety belts in Michigan, just like car drivers or those operating smaller commercial vehicles. The "reminder" comes in the form of \$65 tickets, which are applicable every time a driver is stopped.

The Michigan Center for Truck Safety asks you to ensure that your company has a safety belt policy in place and that your commercial drivers are aware of that policy. It makes sense not only in that you are protecting the livelihood of your company but the lives of your drivers as well. Let's share the road!

Just Because You Can Doesn't Mean You Should

Speeding, rolling through stop signs, making illegal U-turns, and even running red lights— are all traffic laws commonly violated by drivers today. Whether tempted by convenience or simply in a hurry, everyday thousands of drivers do things on the road simply because they can, even though they



shouldn't. While their actions may seem harmless, in actuality, these and other "minor" traffic violations can have severe consequences. More:

http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/8_15_04a.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

GPS Becoming Popular Cost-Saving Tool for Varying Businesses

Global Positioning System (GPS) technology is quickly being recognized as a cost-cutting tool for employers of all sizes and types. A resource that has been used by the military, large trucking companies, and airlines for years, smaller businesses are finding that they, too, can benefit from GPS technology. GPS devices collect a variety of data including driver locations, speeds, and idling times. They are also credited with raising employee productivity, as drivers are more apt to watch their driving habits and behaviors. Employers with GPS capabilities are able to reduce fuel and labor costs and as technology costs continue to fall, GPS sales are expected to grow—from \$13 billion in 2003 to \$22 billion in 2008. Read the full article at

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/business/articles/0806gps06.html>

In-Vehicle DVD Players Pose a Deadly Distraction for Drivers

A deadly motor vehicle crash in Alaska recently grabbed headlines nationwide because a driver is being accused of second degree murder for watching a movie while driving. The distracted driver's pick-up truck crashed head-on into on-coming vehicle killing the two occupants. The crash is raising concerns that in-dashboard DVD navigation systems with safety features allowing the systems to work only when in park or when traveling under 5 mph are being disabled and are instead being used to play DVD movies. Read the full story at

<http://www.christiansciencemonitor.com/2004/0806/p01s01-usgn.html>

NTSB Recommends Black Boxes on All Cars & Trucks

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recently recommended that the federal government require all cars and trucks be equipped with "black box" data recorders that record speed, seat belt use, and braking, along with other data. The recommendation comes after investigators were unable to interview the 86-year-old driver who stepped on the gas pedal instead of the brake and drove into a farmer's market, killing 10 people and injuring 63 last year. The board concluded that a better scientific understanding of the driver's behavior could have been gained if the car were equipped with a black box recorder. For information visit <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0408/04/a01-232388.htm> and

http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2004/08/04/us_urged_to_require_black_boxes_in_autos/

Investigation Finds Many Recalled Vehicles Never Repaired

According to a Consumer Reports investigation, many recall notices don't reach the owners of defective products. The investigation found that a large percentage of vehicles and other products remain defective. In fact, almost one-third of all vehicles are never repaired. The system can break down because product flaws aren't reported to agencies in the first place, and because companies are unable – or unwilling – to track down and notify customers once defects are recognized. Nearly 19 million vehicles were recalled in 2002 – about 1 of 11 on the road. Read the full article at

http://www.consumerreports.org/main/detailv2.jsp?CONTENT%3C%3Ecnt_id=452425&FO LDER%3C%3Efolder_id=156209



New Study Claims Use of Headsets with Cell Phones Improves Driving

A new study sponsored by Plantronics, a leading manufacturer of wireless headsets, measured the physical impairment of drivers who used handheld cell phones while driving, versus those who used headsets. The study found that drivers using headsets demonstrated significantly improved reaction time, accuracy, and consistency of speed. While most cell phone studies focus on the mental distraction cell phone use has on driving, this is one of few studies that focus on the physical distraction. Read the full article at http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/cell_hands_free.html

Cities Ranked By Drivability, Ability to Navigate By Car

A new study commissioned by Avis and Motorola and conducted by author-researcher Bert Sperling lists the USA's 75 biggest metropolitan areas according to how difficult they are to drive in. The study ranked Boston as the most difficult area to navigate by car. Trailing behind are Washington, D.C., San Francisco-Oakland, Baltimore, and New York-Northern New Jersey. The study rates metro areas on factors including street layout, sprawl, obstacles (rivers, lakes and bridges), and congestion data calculated by the Texas Transportation Institute. For more information visit

http://www.usatoday.com/travel/news/2004-08-02-navigate_x.htm and
http://www.motorola.com/mediacenter/news/detailpf/0,,4535_3864_23,00.html

For a full list visit <http://www.usatoday.com/travel/destinations/2004-08-03-cities.htm>

IIHS: July 4th Deadliest Day of the Year for Motor Vehicle Crashes

According to a recent Status Report by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), more motor vehicle deaths occur on the 4th of July holiday than any other day. The Institute studied data from 1986 to 2002 and found that each year on this day an average of 161 people die in crashes. The second worst day for crashes is July 3rd. The report also found that six out of 10 days with the most deaths were holidays or near holidays. View the full Status Report at

<http://www.hwysafety.org/srpdfs/sr3906.pdf>

New Tests Examine Monitored Driving for Lower Insurance Rates

Two new tests will incorporate new technology that will allow insurance companies to monitor driving in exchange for lower rates. The technology will track a combination of when, where, how far, and the speed of motorists, giving insurers a method to reward low-risk driving. Read the full article at

http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2004-08-08-insure_x.htm

CA Highway Patrol Chief Calls for Federally Mandated Truck-Stoppers

The chief of the California Highway Patrol plans to ask federal officials to require truck-stopping devices on tractor-trailers nationwide. The device attaches to the back bumper of the truck, when a car strikes the bumper, the device is activated, and the truck brakes are locked. The effort comes weeks after similar legislation—focusing on HAZMAT trucks and potential terror plots—failed in the California General Assembly. The new effort would include all trucks. Read the full article at

http://www.landlinemag.com/Special_Reports/2004/Aug04/08-06-04%20SR%20truck%20stoppers%20back%20by%20MR.htm

Internet Brings 'Road Geeks' Together

Highway enthusiasts, also known as 'road geeks,' share their love of the road on websites dedicated to our country's roadways. These web sites explore and document every aspect of the road, including the history of freeways, the style of roadway signs, and even the occasional highway "goof." Read the full article at http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2001994614_roadgeeks02.html

News from USDOT

Safety Experts: Funds Needed to Update Data Collection, Sharing Systems

According to traffic experts, data on traffic-related deaths and crashes are two to three years out of date in some states, hindering the creation of new safety regulations, the rebuilding of unsafe roads, the development of safer motor vehicles, and the improvement of emergency services. Experts say that few states have the capability to record and transfer traffic records and crash data electronically. In July, the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) requested federal funding to upgrade the system. The goal is to eliminate paper-based reporting and implement a nationwide reporting and sharing system that includes information about vehicle-related injuries and health care costs, safety stops, driver licenses, vehicle registration, and adjudicated violations. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is seeking public comment on this issue. Read the full article at http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2004-08-08-insure_x.htm View the press release at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr31-04.html>

DOT Announces Historic Low Highway Fatality Rate in 2003

According to the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) the fatality rate on the nation's highways in 2003 was the lowest since record keeping began 29 years ago. The number of crash-related injuries also dropped to a historic low. The agency reports that a total of 42,643 people died and 2.89 million were injured in 2003. In 2002, 43,005 people were killed and 2.93 million were injured. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 1.48 in 2003, down from 1.51 in 2002. This is the first time the rate has dropped below 1.5. Read the full briefing at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr35-04.html>

CDC: Animals Cause 26,000 Roadway Injuries Each Year

According to recent research by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) animals are the cause for more than 26,000 injuries on US roadways. The CDC reports that each year about 200 people die in animal-related traffic crashes. This is the first time the CDC has ever examined non-fatal roadway injuries involving animals. In 2000, there were 247,000 crashes involving animals and the crashes typically occurred on rural roads or highways. The study also found that deer are involved in nearly nine out of 10 animal-related crashes, but also included cows, squirrels, bears, dogs, moose, and raccoons in their research. Read the full article at http://www.accessnorthga.com/news/ap_newfullstory.asp?ID=43063 View the full report at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5330a1.htm>

New Blood Pressure Regulations Could Effect Truckers

Truckers with high blood pressure could lose their ability to drive beginning September 30 under new regulations adopted by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Cardiovascular Medical Advisory Panel in October 2002. Truckers with a blood pressure less than 140/90 can be medically certified. Higher levels are categorized into three stages and require periodic re-certification examinations. For more information visit <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/Pdfs/cardio.pdf>



NHTSA Advisory Gives Parents, Caregivers Summer Safety Tips

NHTSA and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign issued a consumer advisory reminding parents and caregivers that leaving children unattended in a motor vehicle can have fatal consequences, especially in warm weather. Since 1996, at least 241 children have died of heatstroke after being trapped inside parked cars, and at least 19 have died this year. The advisory includes summer safety tips for parents and caregivers. Read the full advisory at <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/nht3204.htm>

International Traffic Safety News

Great Britain Releases 2003 Traffic Report

The Department of Transport recently published the National Statistics on Traffic in Great Britain and found that traffic grew by an estimated 0.8 percent between 2002 and 2003. The growth rate is slightly less than the provisional estimate of 1.4 percent. View the release at http://www.dft.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2004_0112

Scotland Investigation Probes Claim Over Staged Traffic Jams

An investigation of traffic lights is underway in Scotland, after an anonymous inside tip claimed that traffic-light controllers are deliberately staging traffic jams to promote public transportation. The company managing the traffic light system has since called for a full inquiry. For more information visit <http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/hi/news/5029164.html>

UK Recognizes Road Safety Week in November

UK road safety charity, Brake, is calling on fleets and other community members to participate in this year's Road Safety Week, which takes place November 8-14, 2004. The theme for this year's event is alcohol impaired driving. According to Brake, alcohol impaired driving casualties have risen by a third over the past decade, from 15,590 in 1993 to 20,140 in 2002. For more information visit www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk

Electronic Maps to Study Crash Causes, Remedies in UAE

Electronic maps marking the locations where the most traffic crashes occur in the United Arab Emirates will soon be used by the Ras Al Khaimah Traffic and Licensing Department to study their cause and possible remedies. The department will distribute a questionnaire to crash victims and catalog the injuries, reasons for the crash, and driver information. Read the full article at <http://www.gulf-news.com/Articles/Nation2.asp?ArticleID=127598>

UK Motorists Found Guilty of Tailgating

According to a new report produced by the National Motorway Month group, 40 percent of drivers are guilty of traveling too close to the car in front of them. Meanwhile, the Highways Agency recently reported that tailgating is a contributing factor in one third of all personal injury crashes and is also a major cause of aggressive driving. The findings have prompted the group to call on drivers to obey the two-second rule while driving. The National Highway Month will run throughout August and covers issues including, tailgating, driver fatigue, and work zone safety. For more information visit <http://www.racfoundation.org/releases/020804rac.htm>

'New Wave' Technology Focus of UK Initiative

With the introduction of satellite navigation systems, integrated hands-free telephones, electronic parking aids, and in-vehicle e-mail system, many researchers in the UK claim that this 'new wave' technology will help reduce crashes, ease congestion, and cut travel time. Over the next three years, a new British initiative will aim to provide the benefits of these technologies as a low-cost reality for new

road-wise workforce



car buyers. The research could lead to radar-based collision avoidance and road recognition systems becoming standard on every new car within a decade. Read the full article <http://www.femalefirst.co.uk/motoring/232004.htm>

Work/Life

Survey Finds RV Owners Uncomfortable, Unfamiliar Driving Large Vehicles

According to recent survey by GMAC Insurance, many RV owners aren't comfortable or familiar with many of the basic road rules associated with driving a large vehicle. The survey of 2,500 Americans included a series of questions derived from the various states Department of Motor Vehicles driver tests for both standard and oversized vehicles. The participants were also asked questions about their RV plans for the next 12 months and their comfort levels on operating and maintaining their vehicles. There are 7.2 million RVers on the road today and RVing is among the fastest growing leisure activities in America.



Dan Vartanian
NETS Coordinator
Office of Highway Safety Planning
(517) 333-5322
vartanid@michigan.gov
www.michigan.gov/michnets

