road-wise workforce

Traffic Safety News & Facts For Employers
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- NHTSA has selected Delhi Corp. to lead a driver distraction research program. The SAVE-IT program's key objective is "to demonstrate a viable proof of concept that is capable of reducing distraction-related crashes and enhancing the effectiveness of collision warning systems." The three-year program has two developmental phases. The first will focus on human factors and technology development research. The second includes algorithm and guideline development, data fusion, integrated countermeasure development, vehicle demonstration, and evaluation of benefit.

- Each year, vehicle collisions with deer account for more than 200 human and 1.3 million deer fatalities. There are many precautions drivers can take to avoid collisions with deer, according to the Teachers' Insurance Plan, an auto insurance program. An adult deer can weigh more than 200 pounds. A vehicle striking a deer can injure occupants and/or the animal. The crash can also result in thousands of dollars in vehicle damage. October through December are the worst months for these crashes because deer are more prone to wander onto roads and more people travel for the holidays. Teachers' Insurance suggests the following precautions:
  - Be particularly careful at dawn and dusk and when driving over a hill or around a curve where visibility is limited.
  - Use high beams for greater visibility.
  - When you spot a deer, be alert for more deer that may be out of view. Where there is one deer, there are often more nearby.
  - Take deer crossing signs seriously.

For more information and for a brochure on further tips, visit Teachers' Insurance Plan website at www.teachers.com.

MICHIGAN OHSP Office of Highway Safety Planning

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

Michigan NETS Network of Employers For Traffic Safety

- Potential problems with "smart" airbags could delay the installation of these systems. Sensors in the seat are designed to detect the weight of the occupant. The sensor output controls the force of airbag deployment in a crash-- the lighter the occupant, the less force used to deploy the airbag. These systems are designed to prevent the problem of smaller, lighter-weight occupants being injured by an airbag that deploys with full force. However, several manufacturers admit their smart airbags can be fooled. Occupants who shift position in the seat frequently, or placing a child in a very heavy safety seat, can cause the sensors to send the wrong signal to the airbag system. According to published reports, some smart airbag system manufacturers have pulled their systems off the market for more development in an effort to overcome the false reading problem.

- Highway incidents continue to be the leading cause of on-the-job fatalities, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Fatalities resulting from transportation incidents decreased for the third year in a row, from 2,573 in 2000, to 2,517 in 2001. Highway incidents, however, increased about 3 percent from 2000. While truck driver fatalities decreased 6 percent, they continue to incur more workplace fatalities than any other individual occupation. Truck drivers had a rate of 25.3 workplace fatalities per 100,000 employees. For more information, visit the BLS website at www.bls.gov/bls/safety.htm.

- A recent Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) study showed that more than 10% of all Americans, or 25.1 million people, report having driven under the influence at least once in the past 12 months. HHS said the response is up by more than 3 million people from last year. What is especially troubling is that another study done by Johns Hopkins and the

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

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety showed that more than 40% of drivers who were killed in crashes and had high blood alcohol concentration (BAC) were not "problem drinkers." The study found that these drivers did not have a history of frequent, excessive alcohol consumption, nor did they have any personal problems typically associated with chronic and excessive alcohol consumption.

- Safety investigators, concerned about rollover crashes, have asked regulators as well as General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. to take steps to improve the safety of 15-passenger vans. The National Transportation Safety Board wrote to the chief executives of both companies, recommending the manufacturers look into technology that would help drivers maintain better control of these vehicles. Regulators are developing a road test to determine rollover propensity, which is now based on vehicle measurements. That system will rate cars and light trucks, which include pickups, sport utility vehicles, and minivans.

- The Transportation Research Board (TRB) 2003 Annual Meeting will be January 12-16 in Washington, DC. This year's TRB Annual Meeting program will include over 500 sessions, 40 workshops, and 350 TRB Committee meetings covering all aspects of transportation. More than 115 sessions will spotlight four themes of special interest:
  - Security: One Year Later
  - Congestion: What Does the Future Hold?
  - New Tools for Improving Safety
  - The Route to Reauthorization

To find out more about registration or about TRB, visit the TRB website at www4.trb.org/trb/annual.nsf.

Dan Vartanian
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vartanid@michigan.gov
www.michnets.org

- A bill that would make New Jersey the second state in the nation to ban motorists from using hand-held cell phones while driving cleared a Senate committee Oct. 17. Lawmakers had introduced the bill in an attempt to prevent auto crashes. The proposed ban on hand-held cell phones is similar to one already in effect in New York State, with one significant difference. New York police can stop and ticket someone they observe talking on a hand-held cell phone while driving. Under the New Jersey bill, police would have to observe some other violation, such as speeding or weaving, before they could ticket a driver for using a hand-held cell phone.

- Local and state governments should not have to give accident reports and other information collected about dangerous intersections to lawyers who plan to use the information against them in court, a government lawyer told the Supreme Court on Monday. Daniel Hamilton, a prosecuting attorney for Pierce County, Wash., said states may be reluctant to gather information as part of a federal law to ensure highway safety if that data becomes the centerpiece of lawsuits involving traffic accidents. Without a rule preventing release of the information, state participation in the federal highway safety program could be jeopardized, he said. Hamilton's argument stems from a 1996 case in Pierce County in which officials refused to release records about a dangerous intersection to a man suing over an accident in which his wife was killed.

- Investor, car enthusiast and environmentalist Guy Negre has built a car powered by compressed air and hopes it will be running on roads across the world within the next few years. Inside Negre's car, cold air compressed in tanks to 300 times atmospheric pressure is heated and fed into the cylinders of a piston engine. For more information, visit

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http://money.cnn.com/2002/10/27/news/autos_air.reut/index.htm.

- The results for May Click It or Ticket mobilization are in. To view the results, visit the NHTSA website at http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/clickit_ticket/current.html.

- A new regulation to help consumers maintain vehicle tires more safely was announced recently by NHTSA. The rule requires that manufacturers provide additional consumer information and more accessible tire labeling. The new regulation, to be phased in beginning in September 2003, also will allow consumers to more easily identify tires affected by a safety recall. Key provisions of the new rule include:
  - The Tire Identification Number (TIN), which includes information to help identify tires subject to recalls, must be shown on both sides of a tire.
  - All characters in the TIN must be at least one-quarter inch high, to increase readability.
  - In nearly all passenger vehicles, the placard that provides information on proper tire inflation and load limits for a vehicle, must be mounted in a standard place: on the post next to the driver's side.
  - The placard must include information on the maximum weight that a vehicle can carry safely (taking into account the weight of both cargo and occupants).

The new rule can be found on the NHTSA website at www.nhtsa.gov. It also is posted on the USDOT docket management system website at http://dms.dot.gov. The docket number is NHTSA-2002-13678.

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vartanid@michigan.gov
www.michnets.org