

## Traffic Safety News & Facts For Employers December 2002 #2

- According to a study released this week by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis (HCRA) the number of fatal crashes caused by drivers talking on their cell phones is rising significantly. The study estimated 2,600 deaths, 570,000 injuries and \$1.5 million in property damage occur each year in crashes caused by cell phone use. Two years ago HCRA estimated 1,000 deaths. The study also concluded that the economic benefits of unrestricted cell phone use, estimated at \$43 billion, are more or less offset by the potential cost savings of such a ban. Dr. Joshua Cohen, senior research scientist for the project, admits there is a wide range of uncertainty in the data, which estimates the added risk to drivers could be four per million, or 42 per million. A spokesperson for the Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association stated that there are not substantial findings that allow for policy conclusions. The HCRA study found at <http://www.hcra.harvard.edu/cellphones.html> estimated that drivers talking on their phones cause 6 percent of U.S. auto crashes.
- OSHA has recently denied a request to initiate a rulemaking on motor vehicle safety. In responding to a petition seeking a rule, OSHA Administrator, John Henshaw, stated that the enforcement and jurisdictional issues that prompted OSHA to stop working on a seat belt standard in 1995 are still in existence today. The petitioner was submitted by a Rhode Island coalition that noted in their letter to the agency that traffic-related deaths are the leading cause of workplace fatalities.
- To measure the awareness of, participation in, and opinions toward the designated driver concept, Data Development Corporation conducted a recent telephone survey of more than 1,000 Americans for Anheuser-Busch. The following are highlights of the findings:
  - Nearly all Americans have heard of the idea of a Designated Driver



- Six in ten Americans have been a Designated Driver or have been driven home by one, which equates to 116 million American adults
- 54% of American adults have been a Designated Driver and 32% have been driven home by a Designated Driver
- 92% of Americans believe that promoting the use of Designated Drivers is an excellent or good way to reduce the problem of drunk driving

For the complete report, visit [www.alcoholstats.com](http://www.alcoholstats.com).

- The Rubber Manufacturers' Association urges motorists during this holiday season to be tire smart by remembering 4 simple steps: pressure, alignment, rotate and tread. Visit <http://www.rma.org/tiresafety/tiresafety.html>.
- Joseph M. Clapp, administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), will leave the U.S. Department of Transportation next month. Annette M. Sandberg, who has served as deputy administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, is FMCSA's new deputy administrator. For more information visit <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/dot10602.htm>.
- The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) announced new recommendations to protect young, novice drivers; those who ride with them; and others. NTSB urges all states to restrict young, novice drivers with a provisional license- unless accompanied by a supervising driver who is at least 21 years old- from carrying more than one passenger under the age of 20 for at least six months or until they receive an unrestricted license. In 2000, 6.8 percent of the driving population was 20 years old or younger, yet they were involved in 14 percent of fatal crashes. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death of 15-to-20 year-olds in the US. NTSB has determined that there is no uniformity among states in graduated licensing regulations. For more information, visit the NTSB





- website at <http://www.nts.gov/Pressrel/2002/021106.htm>.
- As U.S. environmental regulations tighten and petroleum resources become scarce, vehicle manufacturers are asking a challenging question: Is there a diesel fuel vehicle in the average American's future? Ford Motor Co. is one of the leaders in trying to educate U.S. legislators and the American public on the cleanliness of new light-vehicle diesel engines. During the 2002 International Truck and Bus Meeting and Exposition, one of the highlights was a meeting on environmental stewardship. Discussion quickly turned to diesel engines and the role they will play in the future of the global auto industry. In Europe, during the last eight years diesel use has gone from near zero to 40 percent use and is seen in about 80 percent of the luxury vehicle segment. The higher usage is driven largely by lower taxes on diesel, thus lowering prices.
- National Sleep Awareness Week (NSAW) 2003 will take place March 31 to April 6, 2003. NSAW is a major public awareness campaign sponsored by National Sleep Foundation (NSF) to promote the importance of quality sleep to health, productivity and safety. The campaign coincides with the beginning of Daylight Saving Time, when we turn our clocks forward one hour and therefore risk losing an hour of sleep. The theme for NSAW 2003 is "Let Sleep Work For You!" For more information, visit the NSF website at <http://www.nsa.org/2003preview.html>.
- The frequency of auto crashes has dropped 16 percent since 1980, according to a new study by the Insurance Research Council (IRC). However, the frequency of auto injury claims rose 26 percent during the same period. For more information on *Trends in Auto Injury Claims*, 2002 Edition, contact IRC at [irc@cpcuiia.org](mailto:irc@cpcuiia.org).
- U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta announced that 34 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will share \$50.47 million in incentive grants for increasing seat belt use. "Seat belts are the most effective vehicle safety device in a motor vehicle crash. They save about 12,000 lives each year and would save thousands more if everyone



- buckled up on every trip," Secretary Mineta said. "These grants give states an additional incentive to try to increase seat belt use, thereby saving lives and Federal medical costs." Fiscal year 2003 is the fifth and final year that incentive grants are awarded to states that have either achieved a seat belt usage rate above the national average for 2000 and 2001 or that have achieved a usage rate in 2001 that is higher than the state had in any previous year since 1996.
- Two Olympia, Washington families have started a new Website "fatalfatigue.com." It's part of their effort to convince the State Legislature to increase penalties for driving while drowsy. Both families had members killed by drivers who fell asleep at the wheel. Prosecutors in Snohomish and Cowlitz Counties declined to file charges, saying the deaths were accidents and not covered by state laws on vehicular homicide. A joint Website, <http://www.fatalfatigue.com/> now mourns two lives. The families gathered in Olympia to protest the fact that the longest sentence for either deadly driver was just 15 days in jail.
- At least one out of 100 babies in the United States are involved in a vehicle crash while in the womb, according to a new report from the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Injury Research (CIRCL). For more information on *Characteristics of Pregnant Women in Motor Vehicle Crashes* was published in Injury Prevention, visit [www.bmjournals.com](http://www.bmjournals.com).
- Opinions are flying as people across the country debate the topic of using cell phones while driving. News accounts report a wide range of statistics on the topic -- annual reported fatalities from cell phone-using motorists range from 800 to 8000 and injuries are estimated between 100,000 and 1 million, nationwide. Many of the stories suggest that there is not enough conclusive information to ban the use of handheld devices while driving. One California columnist suggests lawmakers examine other sources of driver distractions including eating and adjusting the sound system. She also suggests that uninsured motorists, who in California were involved in some 20 percent of fatal accidents in 2002, are a more

- pressing problem. As she reminds her readers, "You can't outlaw stupidity." (Source: San Francisco Chronicle, Wireless NewsFactor)
- William J. Canary, president and CEO of American Trucking Associations (ATA), said on Dec. 2 that new federal highway safety statistics for 2001 show a continued reduction in the nation's large truck fatal crash rate. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the new fatal crash rate for large trucks is 2.1 fatal crashes per 100 million vehicles-miles-traveled. The drop in the large truck fatal crash rate coincides with a nearly four percent drop in the actual number of truck-related fatalities for 2001, the fourth year in a row this category has recorded a drop. And truck drivers continue to be the least likely to be cited for alcohol or drug use in fatal crashes where either is a factor.
- The National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running publishes a newsletter, *Safety Focus* that includes grassroots activities, news summaries and a call for survivor advocates. Contact Barbara Plevelich at 202-828-9100 to receive the e-newsletter.
- The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration announced Moving Kids Safely, a nationwide effort to increase the use of safe bus companies for transporting school children to sporting events, field trips, and other extracurricular activities. Moving Kids Safely promotes the identification and use of safe bus companies by encouraging those responsible to find answers to important safety questions when searching for a bus company. These include researching the company's crash history, safety rating and insurance status and determining if company drivers possess current commercial driver's licenses with a "passenger" endorsement and a valid medical certificate. Safety data on truck and bus companies is available through a search function by entering a company's USDOT number or company name in FMCSA's "Safer System" at [www.safersys.org](http://www.safersys.org). Additional information on Moving Kids Safely can be obtained from FMCSA at [www.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov).



- Less than 3 percent of owners believe their in-car navigation system creates dangerous driving situations, according to a new study from J.D. Power and Associates. However, some owners agree that entering a destination into their system while driving is distracting. Federal safety officials believe the navigation systems are distracting for drivers, and favor systems that would prevent entering destinations in the systems while vehicles are moving. "The majority of owners whose system has the function that prevents a destination to be entered while the vehicle is moving do not like this feature, and younger owners are much more adamant in their dissatisfaction," said Frank Forkin, partner and an executive director at J.D. Power and Associates. "Additionally, many owners believe this function is more of a hassle than a safety feature, given that on occasion, systems may freeze up or provide inaccurate directions." The number of models on which navigation systems are offered as an optional or standard feature continues to grow, the study found. More than 60 models now offer navigation systems, and the total number of new vehicles that include navigation systems sold in the U.S. has nearly doubled in the past year to an estimated 300,000 up from 175,000 in 2001.