

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers July 2, 2003

Hiring Unsafe Drivers can Lead to Overwhelming Losses

Cutting corners in hiring and monitoring safe drivers can lead to overwhelming losses, such as a million dollars in punitive damages awarded for negligent hiring and retention of drivers. Driver criteria exist for age, experience, motor vehicle records (MVRs), crashes, employment history and, in some cases, criminal background. **For the full story, visit**

<http://www.etrucker.com/apps/news/article.asp?id=38944>.

U.S. DOT Secretary Mineta Announces an \$11 Million Advertising Campaign to Support July 4th Enforcement of Alcohol Impaired Driving

With alcohol-related fatalities on the rise for the third straight year, U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta unveiled the first ever You Drink & Drive. You Lose. advertising campaign. The \$11 million campaign will air nationwide in support of a nationwide July 4th holiday enforcement crackdown on alcohol-impaired driving. The ads, in both Spanish and English, will run June 20-July 13 on national programs primarily viewed by 21-34 year-old males, the demographic group most likely to drive impaired. The ads focus on the consequences violators will face for driving while impaired by alcohol - they will be arrested. This is the first time the enforcement crackdown will be supported by a national advertising effort. Americans support tougher enforcement and penalties for drinking and driving. According to a 2001 Gallup Organization national survey of the nations driving age population:

- 97 percent of Americans view alcohol-impaired driving as a threat to their families and themselves
- A majority of those surveyed (62 percent) felt that sobriety checkpoints should be used more frequently
- 71 percent felt that drinking-driving penalties should be more severe than they are now.

For more information on the campaign visit the NHTSA website at

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2003&filename=pr30-03.html> or
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2003&filename=drdrive061903.html>.

FMCSA Denies TCA Petition Allowing Drivers 18 to 20 Years to Drive

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) denied a petition of the Truckload Carriers Association (TCA) that proposed a pilot program to allow drivers 18 to 20 years of age to drive trucks in interstate commerce under certain conditions. Under current federal regulations, such drivers must be at least 21 years of age. FMCSA said "it is denying the petition because it does not have sufficient information at this time to make a determination that the safety measures in the pilot program would achieve a level of safety at least equal to that provided by complying with the minimum 21-year age requirement to operate a commercial motor vehicle." The pilot program proposed by TCA on Oct. 2, 2000, would screen candidate drivers, train them at approved truck-driving schools, and provide an apprenticeship with an approved motor carrier until age 21. **For further information, view the FMCSA press release at**
<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/contactus/press/2003/060903.asp>.

Federal Government Considers New Rules for Headlights

The federal government is considering new rules for headlights after receiving thousands of complaints from consumers about glare. In a report recently, NHTSA said it has gotten more than 4,000 responses -- most of them complaints -- since it issued a request for comments on headlights in September 2001. Consumers complained about the glare from light trucks and sport-utility vehicles, which have headlights that are mounted higher than on cars, as well as the glare from fog lights. They also complained about glare from high-intensity headlights, which have a bluish hue and are brighter than traditional lights.

U.K. Considers Implementation of Pay-As-You-Drive Insurance Scheme

The U.K. government is considering the implementation of a pay-as-you-drive insurance scheme. If the plans proceed, the UK's 24 million cars could be fitted with satellite receivers that will monitor where and when they drive, and then will be taxed accordingly, within 10 years. These plans emerged a week after the Department for Transport announced trials of global positioning system (GPS) technology to control car speed, and this comes as the latest idea in a number of transport initiatives that use GPS technology. The government has been quick to state that this latest scheme, which is being considered as a solution to the country's increasing road congestion, is not yet cast in stone. However, a very similar system applicable to lorries, the Lorry Road User Charging (LRUC) system, is going ahead, with roll out scheduled for 2006. While both schemes will likely be off set by reductions in other taxes such as fuel and road tax, road users have expressed concern about the consequences of implementing such a system and the practicalities of the technology.

A San Diego State University Survey Identifies Very Dangerous Traffic Safety Attitudes by Young Drivers

A survey, researched at San Diego State University, identified some very dangerous attitudes about traffic safety among young drivers. "These young drivers on average felt they were speeding only if they were driving around or above 90 mph, that teen traffic violators are less concerned with many forms of risky driving behavior, and that 62 percent of the entire group admitted to being in a car during such activities as drunk driving, drag racing, reckless driving or other dangerous acts." The survey group consisted of 2,310 California teenagers, 1,430 of whom were applying for their first driver's license and 880 of whom had been charged with a traffic offense. **For more information, contact Sheila Sarkar, CA NETS Coordinator at San Diego State University at 619-594-0164 or msarkar@mail.sdsu.edu.**

Wayne State University Researchers Concludes that MRI Technology is Useful in Understanding Brain Function While Driving

As part of a General Motors-Wayne State University (WSU) School of Medicine partnership aimed at measuring driver distraction, researchers from the school's Transportation Imaging Laboratory recently concluded an initial round of experiments. The tests confirm that using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a valid way to determine how a person processes information while driving. "The MRI technology offers us great potential to further understand the functioning of the brain when driving," said Christopher Green, M.D., Ph.D., executive director of the Transportation Imaging Laboratory and faculty member in the departments of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences and Diagnostic Radiology. "We are very optimistic about the information that this research could reap." **For more information, visit the WSU press release at http://www.media.wayne.edu/news.releases/02July/gm_07_17_02.html.**

FHWA Research Engineers Forecast Highway Advances

A future in which cracked bridges and potholes repair themselves, guardrails realign automatically after impact, bridges adjust their shapes to control movement caused by winds, and metal structures self-clean to avoid corrosion is envisioned in a forecast of advances in highway technology by scientists from the Federal Highway Administration's Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center. **For more information, visit the FHWA website at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/pressroom/nanotech.htm>.**

NHTSA Releases Report Outlining Initiatives Reduce Deaths and Injuries from Vehicle Rollover Crashes

NHTSA has released a report that outlines initiatives the agency plans to pursue to reduce deaths and injuries attributable to vehicle rollover crashes. A Transportation Research Board report -- An Assessment of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Rating System for Rollover Resistance -- found that the static stability factor is a useful indicator of a vehicle's propensity to roll over. **For the full report, visit the NHTSA website at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/vrtc/ca/capubs/IPTRolloverMitigationReport/>.**

Police Asked to Aid States in Determining Crash Trends by Collecting Data Uniformly

In an effort to track crashes caused by cell phone use, highway officials are encouraging states to report when crashes are caused by distracted drivers. Under new guidelines, police are being asked to say whether the driver was distracted and if that distraction was caused by a cell phone, a radio, another passenger, another vehicle or something else. States are asked to collect a total of 111 pieces of information from each crash under voluntary guidelines jointly developed by federal highway safety agencies and the Governors Highway Safety Association, which represents state highway officials. Almost all states use some form of the voluntary crash reporting guidelines, which were first issued five years ago to help standardize crash reports so it's easier to compare data from state to state. The data can then be used to determine crash trends and develop laws to reduce traffic deaths. **For additional information, view this press release at http://www.ghsa.org/html/media/press_releases/062403.html.**

UK Fleets Ignore Potential Dangers of Over-the-Counter Medicines While Driving

UK fleets are still ignoring the potential dangers of employees driving after taking over-the-counter medicines, a new U.K. survey suggests, despite a government report highlighting the problem. A series of more than 200 safety audits on company fleets found many are running the safety gauntlet by not having policies in place that safeguard against the potential danger. The findings, compiled by risk management company, Risk Answers, comes soon after reports that the labeling of some over-the-counter medicines is inconsistent, inaccurate and maybe dangerous. A Department for Transport study, undertaken by Loughborough University's Sleep Research Unit, found the recommended range of advisory labels on medicines warning of possible drowsiness is not always followed closely by drug manufacturers.

FHWA Opens Test Facility to Test Intelligent Vehicle Technologies

U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta announced the opening last week of a new test facility in Northern Virginia where technologies will be tested that are designed to save lives by preventing crashes at intersections. Secretary Mineta underscored the importance of intelligent vehicle

road-wise workforce

technologies by pointing to the Administration's 2003 surface transportation reauthorization proposal - the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA). In it the



Administration requests almost \$1.7 billion in Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) funding over six years beginning Oct. 1, 2003, a 20 percent increase over Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) levels. The Department's support for intelligent highway and vehicle development is part of its ITS program. **Additional information on the Intelligent Vehicle Initiative is available at the ITS web site at <http://www.its.dot.gov/ivi/ivi.htm>.**

Volkswagen and Scholastic Marketing Partners Launch National Youth Safety Initiative—Fasten Your Seat Belt

Volkswagen of America, Inc. and Scholastic Marketing Partners, the Company's consumer marketing division, have teamed up to educate and encourage minority teens to make a difference, buckle up, and help save lives. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for American teenagers. Even more at risk are African-American and Hispanic teenagers who are 50 percent less likely to wear safety belts than other teen groups in the U.S., putting them at twice the risk to die in an automobile accident. The national youth car safety initiative called Fasten Your Seat Belt... Go Far! in being launched in eight major U.S. cities this month. Together, the companies are distributing 12,000 curriculum kits to high school science and social studies teachers in these metropolitan areas: Atlanta; Boston; Detroit; Los Angeles; Miami/Ft. Lauderdale; New York/Newark; San Francisco and Washington, D.C. **For more information on the campaign by Volkswagen, visit http://www.vw.com/vwnews/articles/20030409_youth.htm.**

NHTSA Delays Manufacturer Compliance with Tire Safety Information

In response to petitions for reconsideration, NHTSA has decided to delay the effective date for manufacturer compliance with tire safety information. Instead of taking effect Sept. 1, 2003, the rule will be postponed for a year, until Sept. 1, 2004. After the final rule was made, petitions for reconsideration were submitted to that agency by tire and vehicle manufacturers as well as some of their trade associations. In addition to requesting the delay, they asked for changes in the final rule. However, the notice in the June 5 Federal Register rejected these changes, agreeing only to delay the effective date of the standard. **For further information, contact Mary Versailles, NHTSA Office of Planning and Consumer Standards at 202-366-2750.**

Public Supports Additional Highway and Transit Program Investment

A survey conducted June 7-10, 2003, and released recently by the Transportation Construction Coalition found that 77 percent of eligible voters would be willing to invest up to nine cents per day to improve road and bridge conditions and help reduce traffic congestion and highway fatalities. **Go to http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=1536 for further information.**

First New Tire Standards Issued for Cars and Light Trucks

The federal government recently issued the first new tire-safety standards for cars and light trucks in 35 years, setting performance criteria that will take effect by 2007. NHTSA will require that tires for vehicles up to 10,000 pounds meet tougher high-speed and endurance standards, as well as new criteria for low-pressure performance. The new rules also will require for the first time that light trucks - sport-utility vehicles, vans and pickups -- meet car tire-safety standards, NHTSA said. The agency said it extended the standards to light trucks because of those vehicles' increasing popularity. **For more information, view the press release on NHTSA's website at**



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U.K. Government to Ban Hand-Held Cell Phones

Using a hand-held cell phone while driving is to be banned in a long-awaited clamp down on phone use in cars by the U.K. government, it has been announced recently. The new ban will take effect December 1, 2003 with offenders facing fines ranging from £30 to £1,000 if the case goes to court. Those caught breaking the ban would also get three penalty points on their driving licences for each offense. Under current laws motorists can only be prosecuted for using cell phones if they fail to keep proper control of their vehicle. The U.K. government announced it was considering the law change last August and has carried out a public consultation on its proposals which, it said, demonstrated overwhelming support for a ban.

Failing to Carry Out Basic Maintenance on Company Cars is Costing the Company Millions

Nearly one million U.K. company car drivers risk costing their companies thousands of pounds by failing to carry out even basic checks on their company cars. Despite regular warnings from the fleet industry, drivers are repeatedly failing to check oil levels in their cars, new research has revealed. Spot checks carried out by Kwik-Fit Fleet and supported by Drive & Survive and Pirelli have revealed that 25% of cars checked needed at least a litre of oil, with one vehicle having no trace of oil on the dipstick. Running out of oil can destroy a modern engine and replacing a power unit could cost a fleet £7,000, plus the cost of providing a replacement vehicle while the repair is being carried out.