

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers October 15, 2004

NETS Feature

Drive Safely Work Week

Hundreds of Michigan businesses across the state promoted the annual NETS Drive Safely Work Week campaign to their workforce in October. Members of the Michigan NETS Advisory Council (<http://michigan.gov/michnets/0,1607,7-188-26045---,00.html>) kicked off the campaign at a press conference hosted by AAA Michigan at their headquarters in Dearborn on October 4, 2004. Highlights at the press conference included two awards that were presented to elite drives from UPS and Conway Central Express. For more information link to http://www.freep.com/news/driving/helms5e_20041005.htm

Wayne State University (WSU) promotes Safe Driving

WSU utilized the Drive Safely Work Week campaign to launch the University's first ever, "Drive Safely to WSU Campaign." Sponsored by the College of Engineering's Transportation Research Group and Bioengineering Center the campaign was targeted to educate the 30,000-student population plus an additional 8,000 faculty and staff regarding priority traffic safety issues. The three-day event included informational booths focusing on the areas of distracted driving, aggressive driving, drinking and driving, safety restraints and child passenger safety. Other demos taking place on campus included sobriety tests with fatal vision goggles, rollover and seat belt convincers, child safety seat inspections conducted by certified technicians, taste samples and recipes for "mooxtails" and additional tours at the crash test lab in the Bioengineering center at WSU.

Common Sense Solutions....to Intersection Safety Problems

The majority of serious injuries and deaths in Michigan occur on local roads. A workshop has been developed to provide a basic understanding of intersection safety problems, issues and liability, and the role they play in making local intersections safer and protecting organizations from litigation. Workshops will be offered through August 2005. For more information on workshop locations and dates please link to: <http://www.michiganlap.org/workshop/datesIntSafety.html>

NETS Helps Employee Parents Cope With Teen Driving Issues

In an age of two-parent working families and single-parent families, the newest driver in the family is often viewed as a convenience for running errands, picking up siblings, or driving themselves to activities and to school. Yet motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of young people and the situation is most dangerous for 16-year-olds. Each year, nearly 3 million teens are involved in traffic crashes on our nation's roadways. If parents aren't worried, they should be. A motor vehicle crash is the single most likely event to kill or injure their son or daughter. More.....
http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/10_15_04a.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Lawsuit Raises Employer Liability, Drowsy Driving Concerns

A recent lawsuit in which a driver was severely injured after she was struck from behind by a medical resident who fell asleep behind the wheel after being on duty for 34 hours at a local Chicago Hospital



is raising employer liability concerns over employee drowsy driving.

According to the Committee on Interns and Residents (CIR), hospitals have a responsibility to ensure that a medical resident's ability to function while at work or driving home is not impaired by sleepiness or fatigue as a result of excessive work hours and scheduling practices. While the courts disagreed, an appeal has been filed.

Laws Banning Cell Phone Use While Driving May Not Reduce Crashes

A new study issued by the American Enterprise Institute-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies reports that laws against driving while using a cell phone may have little effect on the number of crashes. According to the study, while still at high risk, drivers who use cell phones are approximately 36 percent less likely to be involved in a crash than previous studies have reported. The study, which looked at survey data from more than 7,000 individuals, also found that drivers who use hands-free devices are more careful drivers than their counterparts who use hand-held cell phones. For more information visit <http://www.govtech.net/news/news.php?id=91666>

Pennsylvania Truck Drivers Host Event to Educate Drivers

A group of truck drivers in Pennsylvania are attempting to clear up the public's misconception of truckers based on the results of a recent study. The author of a study investigating the truck driver profession asked drivers what they thought of truckers and found that most of the respondents feel that truck drivers are dangerous and reckless on the road. In response, a group of truck drivers hosted the International Highway Interdependence Day to showcase how the public relies on truckers to get goods and services. The event offered visitors free truck rides and a close up look of the trucks. Read the full article at <http://www.timesleader.com/mld/timesleader/news/9760980.htm>

Virtual Display Could Reduce Roadway Crashes

According to the Information Society Technologies (IST), less than one third of all driving is done at night, yet over 50 percent of fatalities occur during this period. For pedestrians, 60 percent of fatalities occur after dark. IST reports that part of the reason for these high fatality rates is that drivers have to change the focus of their eyes and the direction of their gaze every time they look down at the instrument panel. However, a head-up display (HUD) can help reduce these crashes. The HUD concept projects a virtual image of the instruments along a direction closer to the driver's gaze when looking ahead and at a focal point far away from the driver; thereby eliminating the need for drivers to change their focus when they look at the display panel.

Sign Calculates Animals Hit Along Wildlife Corridor to Warn Drivers

An electronic sign along a Montana wildlife corridor warns drivers of potential animal crossings by tallying and posting on an electronic roadway sign the number of animals killed per year on the 20-mile stretch of road. The project is being conducted by state, university, and private groups to cut the death and injury rate of animals on that particular section of roadway. Read the full article at <http://www.billingsgazette.com/index.php?id=1&display=rednews/2004/10/03/build/state/75-sign-tallies-animals.inc>

Enhanced Protective Glass Reduces In-vehicle Noise

According to the Enhanced Protective Glass Automotive Association, enhanced protective glass (EPG) can improve sound transmission loss by a noticeable 4 decibels compared with that of conventional tempered glass. In addition to offering enhanced security, safety, and solar protection, EPG would improve the functionality of in-vehicle telematic and wireless communications devices that are dependent on speech recognition and voice clarity. For more information visit http://cnniw.yellowbrix.com/pages/cnnmoney/Story.nsp?story_id=57891314&ID=cnnmoney&scategory=Business%2Band%2BFinance

Red Light Cameras Bring Safety, Amid Concerns

According to Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, there are about 200,000 crashes caused by red light running each year, resulting in approximately 1,000 deaths and 150,000 injuries. To reduce and prevent these crashes, 18 states and 107 cities have installed red-light running cameras at intersections. However, despite studies that prove photo enforcement reduces such crashes, opponents continue to claim that cameras presume guilt, invade privacy, generate revenue for local governments and camera companies, and have led to an increase in rear-end collisions. Some drivers use reflective covers and sprays to thwart cameras. Meanwhile many states continue to consider the use of photo enforcement, and some of the states currently using photo enforcement have introduced legislation to extend yellow lights and include roadway signs warning drivers of photo enforcement in advance. Read the full article at

<http://www.stateline.org/stateline/?pa=story&sa=showStoryInfo&id=402437>

Chicago Tribune Reporter Offers Car Buyers Useful Advice

A recent article in "The Chicago Tribune" offered helpful advice to drivers who are considering retiring a vehicle. Reporter Rick Popely said that while there's no formula to determine the best time to buy a new vehicle, if repairs are less than a new-car monthly payment, stick with the used car—unless there is a safety concern. According to Popely, safety and dependability must be considered when contemplating a trade-in. Cars 10 years old or more generally don't have recent safety advances and major mechanical problems may cost more to fix than the vehicle is worth.

DaimlerChrysler Creates Rear-Wheel Drive Safety Training Video

DaimlerChrysler has announced its production of a driver safety training video that educates drivers of the benefits of their new rear-wheel drive vehicle. The video also includes information on other updated engineering advancements including all-speed traction control, electronic stability program, and an independent rear suspension. For information visit

http://www.fleet.chrysler.com/rwd_video.jsp

Cell Phone Use, Mismatched Bumpers Lead To Higher Crash Costs

Cost concerns over tailgating crashes are on the rise, according to a recent article in "The Los Angeles Times." The California Department of Motor Vehicles states that tailgating is the leading cause of rear-end collisions and the cost of repairing vehicles in these crashes has risen dramatically in recent years. Using data from a recent Insurance for Institute for Highway Safety (IIHA) report, the article highlighted how the dangers of tailgating are heightened due to the differences in car and SUV bumpers. According to the report, even though there are federal requirements that car bumpers have to match up with those of other vehicles, no such requirements apply to SUVs and some of these vehicles don't have bumpers.

IIHS: Parents Compromise Safety When Choosing Cars for Teen Drivers

According to a recent report by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), teen drivers often drive vehicles that are relatively old and small with inferior crash protection. Drawing from a survey of North Carolina and Tennessee parents, about half of the respondents said that cost was the most important factor in purchasing a vehicle for their teen driver. Safety was mentioned in about 40 percent of the interviews and fewer than 10 percent mentioned that size was important. Yet, according to the Institute the death rate is about twice as high in small cars as in large cars. Researchers also observed vehicles in student parking lots at Virginia, Connecticut, and Mississippi high schools and on average, found that more than half of the vehicle were ones that didn't IIHS doesn't recommend for beginners.

View the full report at <http://www.iihs.org/srpdfs/sr3908.pdf>



Every 30 Minutes Someone Dies In An Alcohol-Related Crash

More than 40 percent of the 43,000 traffic fatalities in 2002 were alcohol-related, which translates to one death every 30 minutes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has introduced a new strategy to address impaired driving including high visibility enforcement, support for prosecutors and DWI courts, and screening and brief intervention. For more information visit www.stopimpaireddriving.org

NHTSA Pushes for Safer Seat Belts

As part of a push to better protect vehicle passengers during rollover crashes, NHTSA is preparing rules that could lead to dramatic improvements in seat belt designs. The new rules along with the agency's recent pledge to improve vehicle roof strength standards are part of a two-pronged approach to save lives in the event of a rollover crash. According to NHTSA, seat belts contribute as least as much as collapsing roofs to head and neck injuries because they can allow occupants to shift out of their seat and hit the roof. Seat belts are currently designed to restrain passengers in a frontal collision. However, in a rollover crash, occupants can slide sideways and strike the side of the vehicle. In addition, slack in the seat belt allows occupants to drop toward the roof. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0410/10/a01-297772.htm>

New Website Devoted To All Things Vehicle Safety-Related

NHTSA recently launched a new website devoted entirely to vehicle safety. The new site provides valuable information to consumers, including equipment and safety information, crash test and roll over ratings, and allows consumers to file a complaint or vehicle defect to the agency. For more information visit the site at www.safercar.gov

Border Safety Grants Focus On Trucks Entering the United States

The US Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced border safety grants to Texas and Mexico totaling \$31.2 million. The funds will be used to improve border inspection facilities and ensure the safety of trucks entering the United States, while moving goods quickly and efficiently. Read the release at <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/dot18004.htm>

FHWA Study Finds Truckers More at Fault in Certain Crashes

A new report conducted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) focusing on fault, unsafe driving acts, and total harm in car/truck collisions found that truck drivers are more likely to be at fault. The agency advises that driver, vehicle, and roadway safety programs for truckers should address backing, rear-end, right-and left-turn, and sideswipe collisions. Additionally, FHWA recommends that similar programs for passenger vehicles should focus on head-on and angle crashes. View the full report at <http://www.tfhr.gov/safety/hsis/pubs/04085/index.htm>

Truck Hours-of-Service Rules Extended As Courts Address Concerns

The new hours-of-service rules to go into effect in January were rejected by the US Court of Appeals. The court stated that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) failed to consider the driver's health. Meanwhile, the rules have been extended until September 2005 or until FMCSA develops a replacement rule. For more information visit http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/Home_Files/revised_hos.asp

International Traffic Safety News

UK Finance Directors Becoming More Involved in Fleet Management

Research suggests that financial directors are getting more involved in fleet management in the UK, according to UK-based magazine, "Financial Director." The magazine in association with Hitachi Capital conducted a survey of 470 finance directors and found that while 41 percent of the surveyed companies employed a fleet manager, finance directors were directly responsible for fleet management in 72 percent of companies without fleet managers. Read the full article at http://www.fleet-central.com/global/t_inside.cfm?rank=5297

UK Crash Investigator Uses Road Deaths as Safety Appeal

According to a UK crash investigator, even though it is relatively easy to drive cars capable of 150 mph or more, the human body could still only cope with the same damage his ancient ancestors could. As part of the recent Midlands region of the Association of Car Fleet Operators meeting, the investigator was encouraging fleets to improve safety on their vehicles and to reduce their crash risk. In the UK, 3,500 people die every year in motor vehicle crashes, while worldwide 1.2 million people die—that's equivalent to one death every 25 seconds.

UK Releases 2003 Road Casualty Report

The UK Department of Transport released its 2003 annual report on road casualties in Great Britain. 3,508 people were killed on Britain's roads in 2003, an increase of 2 percent from 2002 statistics. The number of people seriously injured in 2003 fell 6 percent to 33,707. For more information visit http://www.dft.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2004_0125

Study: Transportation, Highway Infrastructure Funding Public Health Issue

The Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) released "Safer Drivers in Safer Cars on Safer Roads: An Invitation to Action," a new report intended to shift thinking about roadways and roadway infrastructure funding from a transport policy issue to one of traffic and road safety as a preventable national public health problem. View the full report at <http://www.caa.ca/e/news-issues/pdf/Safer%20roads%20-%20CAA%20invite%20to%20action.pdf>

New European Driver's License To Be Valid For 10 Years

European transport ministers recently agreed that all citizens should have the same 10-year driving license across the European Union (EU). Under the new agreement the EU will eventually eliminate approximately 110 different driving licenses currently being issued in Europe and instead replace them with one single model. The new license will resemble a credit card and would be valid 10 years for cars and motorcycles and 5 years for trucks and buses. The new licensing system is anticipated to draw criticism from some EU citizens who are used to having their driving license for a lifetime without undergoing a regular examination. For more information visit <http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcmuri=tcm:29-130636-16&type=News>

EU Community Commit to Intelligent Vehicle Safety Systems

The European Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) recently reported that 18 EU member states have committed to speeding up the introduction of intelligent vehicle safety systems. For more information visit http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srchidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:22746



New Department to Focus on Road Safety Education in Malaysia

Under the Minister of Transport, a new Road Safety Department has been established in Malaysia. The new department will focus on education and the development of road safety policies. The goal of the department is to reduce roadway deaths from 4.9 per 10,000 motor vehicles to less than two—a comparable figure to developed countries. Its other functions include reducing property damage crashes, carrying out research and developing safety policies, streamlining all activities on road safety, and planning road safety education and awareness programs. Read the full article at http://cnniw.yellowbrix.com/pages/cnniw/Story.nsp?story_id=58225863&ID=cnniw&scategory=Transportation%3ARegulations%20

Increased Roadways Signs Raise Distraction Concerns in UK

The increased use of speed cameras and road signs on UK roadways to improve safety are quickly becoming recognized as a distraction among some critics. Since 1997, the number of speed and traffic light cameras has risen from 200 to nearly 6,000. Roadway signs have also increased along UK roadways, warning drivers of every possible danger, according to critics. The increase of roadway signage comes as the UK government aims to reduce road casualties 40 percent by the year 2010. Read the full article at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/10/07/nroad107.xml&sSheet=/news/2004/10/07/ixhome.html> View the release at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/news-releases/news-rel-2004/48-04.htm>

New UK Safety Campaign Focuses on Rural Roads

The UK government has launched a new safety campaign targeting fleet drivers traveling on rural roads. While almost two-thirds of fatalities occur on the UK's rural road infrastructure, studies from the Department of Transport have shown that drivers take less care when traveling in the countryside and that 33 percent of drivers believe fewer crashes occur on these roads because they are quieter.

Work/Life

SAFE KIDS, FedEx Team Up to Promote Child Pedestrian Safety

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign and FedEx Express recently released an observational study that examines the conditions at signalized intersections near elementary and middle schools. The goal of the study is to raise both local and national awareness of child pedestrian safety issues. For more information visit http://www.safekids.org/content_documents/Ped_Study_2004.pdf