

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers September 1, 2004

### NETS Feature

#### **Michigan is on its way to 90% Belt Use**

Michigan is on the verge of reaching its goal of 90% safety belt use in 2004. During the recent Memorial Day mobilization, safety belt use increased to nearly 87 percent – a jump of 2 percent from its previous high of 85 percent. By reaching 90 percent, the Office of Highway Safety Planning estimates that 50 lives will have been saved and 130 serious injuries prevented this year alone. In an effort to continue this life-saving feat, a second safety belt mobilization will end the summer travel season. Between August 30 and September 12, more than 500 police agencies across the state are joining together in the statewide *Buckle Up or Pay Up, Click It or Ticket* safety belt enforcement effort. More.... [http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593\\_3504-98450--.00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504-98450--.00.html)

#### **No One Is Crash-Proof**

Driving is a task that requires your full attention every drive, every time. While taking one's eyes of the road presents obvious risks, drivers engage in many other potentially unsafe driving behaviors that draw their attention away from the primary task of driving. Drowsy, distracted, aggressive, and alcohol impaired driving all pose individual risks that put the driver and others sharing the road at risk for a crash. How safe is YOUR driving? More..... [http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/9\\_1\\_04a.asp](http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/9_1_04a.asp)

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **Labor Day Holiday Raises the Issue of Drowsy Driving**

The upcoming Labor Day weekend is approaching, bringing with it increased traffic on the nation's roads and highways and increased risk of drowsy driving crashes. According to the National Sleep Foundation's 2002 Sleep in America poll, 51 percent of adult drivers say they have driven a vehicle while feeling drowsy in the previous year, and 17 percent have actually fallen asleep at the wheel. Meanwhile, a recent study conducted by the Henry Ford Hospital Sleep Disorders and Research Center found that not only do crashes occur because people fall asleep while driving, but also because sleepy drivers are prone to making bad decisions behind the wheel. View the report's conclusions at <http://www.journalsleep.org/citation/sleepdata.asp?citationid=2416>

#### **Exxon Mobil Enacts Cell Phone Policy**

The National Safety Council (NSC) praised Exxon Mobil Corporation for its safety leadership in enacting a ban on cell phone use by Exxon Mobil employees and contractors while driving on company business. The new policy was developed after Exxon Mobil commissioned an analysis of available science on cell phone use that concluded talking on a cell phone significantly degrades driving performance. The Exxon Mobil report analyzing cell phone research is available at the NSC website. [http://www.nsc.org/public/cellphone\\_study.doc](http://www.nsc.org/public/cellphone_study.doc)

#### **New Report Examines Causes, Solutions to Red-Light Running**

The Maine Department of Transportation has released a report examining the causes and potential solutions to red-light running. The report includes a review of literature, analysis of crashes, and interviews with Maine drivers. According to the report, 25 percent of drivers involved in red-light

running crashes were unaware of the red signal. View the full report at  
<http://www.maine.gov/mdot/transportation-research/pdf/report0111f.pdf>

### **SAE Updates “Automotive Safety Handbook”**

The Society of Automotive Engineers has updated its “Automotive Safety Handbook,” which covers both active and passive safety systems. The Handbook includes detailed information on crash avoidance, occupant protection, and biomechanics. Other subjects include safety legislation, vehicle body and interior design, crash simulation tests, pedestrian protection, and compatibility. For more information visit [http://www.sae.org/servlets/productDetail?PROD\\_TYP=BOOK&PROD\\_CD=R-325](http://www.sae.org/servlets/productDetail?PROD_TYP=BOOK&PROD_CD=R-325)

### **News from USDOT**

#### **NHTSA: Alcohol Fatalities Declined in 2003**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently announced that alcohol fatalities declined in 2003, the first drop since 1999. The agency credited the reduction in large part to the 28 states that demonstrated a decline in impaired driving fatalities. A total of 17,013 alcohol-related fatalities were recorded in 2003, down 511, from the total of 17,524 recorded in 2002. The decline comes as all 50 states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws making a BAC of .08 the legal definition of impaired driving. Read the press release at

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr38-04.html>

#### **NHTSA: Safer Vehicles, Seat Belt Use Helped Reduce Crash Fatalities**

NHTSA credits safer vehicles and increased seat belt use for the recent decline in crash fatalities. The agency recently reported 42,643 people died in motor vehicle crashes in 2003, down 362 from 2002. This is the first decline in traffic deaths in six years. However, the agency also reported that motorcyclist fatalities increased by 12 percent this year and fatalities in large truck crashes increased from 4,939 to 4,986 in 2003. In addition, SUV rollover fatalities increased by almost 7 percent, and despite the overall increase in seat belt use, more than half of those killed in passenger vehicles were not wearing seat belts. For more information visit...

[http://www.caranddriver.com/article.asp?section\\_id=30&article\\_id=8467](http://www.caranddriver.com/article.asp?section_id=30&article_id=8467)

#### **Lack of Data Delays Action On Side-Impact Protection for Kids**

NHTSA has announced that action on child side-impact safety protection will be delayed until at least 2006. NHTSA cites a lack of data on why side impacts are so harmful to child passengers as the reason for the delay. Seven thousand children under age 8 died in auto crashes between 1991 and 2000, and it is estimated that 42 percent occurred as a result of side-impact collisions. Read the full article at <http://www.detnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0408/12/a01-235231.htm>

#### **Consumer Activists Criticize Ruling on Carmaker Auto-Safety Data**

NHTSA ruled that data relating to unsafe vehicles or defective parts won't be made available to the public, citing that doing so would give competitors too much information and that the information wouldn't be of much use to consumers. NHTSA has been receiving auto safety data since late last year as part of the TREAD Act, a law passed in 2000 in response to the rollovers of Ford Explorers equipped with certain Firestone tires. The law requires quarterly reports from automakers, tire makers and suppliers on warranty claims, customer complaints, injuries, fatalities and other auto-safety information. Opponents argue that the new ruling would prohibit the public from making sure that NHTSA is constantly monitoring automakers. Read the full article at

<http://www.aiada.org/article.asp?id=21336&cat=Government>



## **OSHA, NHTSA To Host 'Seat Belt' Symposium September 14th**

To encourage seat belt use among federal employees, the US Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and NHTSA will host a symposium addressing the issue. The event will take place on Tuesday, September 14, 2004 at 10:30 a.m., during the National Safety Council Congress & Expo in New Orleans, Louisiana. Public and private sector safety executives will participate in two panels to promote the benefits of seat belt use and their most effective practices. NETS, as well as NETS board member, Nationwide Insurance, are among the panelists scheduled to discuss the issue. For more information visit

[http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_table=NEWS\\_RELEASES&p\\_id=10966](http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=NEWS_RELEASES&p_id=10966)

## **NHTSA Upgrades Ruling To Make Vehicles More Visible**

NHTSA issued a final ruling upgrading the federal lighting standard for motor vehicle turn signal lamps, stop lamps, taillamps, and parking lamps. The new ruling is anticipated to significantly increase the conspicuity of motor vehicles so that their presence is better perceived and their signals better understood. According to the agency, motorists will be able to see the lights of another vehicle from wider angles to the front, side, and rear of the vehicle. The final rule takes effect on September 10th.

## **International Traffic Safety News:**

### **UK Cracks Down On Uninsured Drivers**

The UK government plans to crack down on uninsured drivers after industry experts called for a sterner approach to help make the roads safer for fleets. The new measures include giving more power to police forces, levying fixed penalties on drivers who fail to insure their vehicles after several reminders, and creating links to databases that show police which drivers remain uninsured. According to UK officials, the cost of uninsured drivers totals £200 million a year and estimates that uninsured drivers are 10 times more likely to have been convicted of alcohol impaired driving and six times more likely to have been convicted of driving an unsafe vehicle. View the release at

[http://www.dft.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn\\_id=2004\\_0111](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2004_0111)

### **New Guidelines To Help Police Investigate At-Work Crashes**

UK police officers will soon be provided with a series of guidelines outlining how to investigate companies whose employees have been involved in a traffic crash while driving for work. The guidelines will include information for police officers dealing with work-related road safety issues, criteria for police officers to identify 'management failings,' and develop a tool kit of possible follow-up actions. The proposal comes after a recommendation made in previous reports that health and safety and road safety enforcing agencies should develop an approach to investigate at-work crashes.

### **UK Government To Study Crash Fatalities**

Using data from coroners, hospitals, and the Department of Health, the UK Department of Transport plans to conduct research on in-vehicle crashes that occurred this year. The goal is to reveal more information on how people are treated at the scene of a crash and the time that is used to transport victims to the hospital, especially in rural areas.

### **Study: Alcohol Impacts Drowsy Driving**

New research, which included a full sized interactive car simulator, by the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University revealed that very low blood alcohol levels significantly increased the risk of sleep-related fatal motor vehicle crashes. The study also noted that alcohol continued to interact with sleep-related impaired driving even after breath alcohol levels dropped to near zero.

Reference: "Hum Psychopharmacol," 2004. Barrett, PR. Reyner, LA

### **UK Considers Pay-As-You-Drive Insurance**

Using telematics—a combination of information and communication technologies—some UK insurance companies are planning to introduce itemized pay-as-you-go monthly insurance bills. The black box devices will be able to record distance, speed, time spent on the road, and exactly which roads were taken. Using this information insurance companies will be able to adjust itemized bills accordingly. While it could mean cheaper bills for motorists who only drive occasionally, drivers who travel long distance on busy roads could face higher costs. An 18-month pilot test involving 5,000 vehicles is set to take place by the end of the year. Read the full article at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/magazine/3574010.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/3574010.stm)

### **Can Public Humiliation Curb Speeding Drivers?**

Safety advocates in the UK are campaigning for the creation of an electronic sign that casts a frown on speeding drivers. Currently, electronic warning signs flash motorists' speeds as an encouragement for drivers to slow down. Advocates believe that the humiliation of a frown or grumpy face may encourage drivers to slow down. Drivers traveling within the speed limit will be rewarded with a smiling face. Read the full article at [http://icrenfrewshire.icnetwork.co.uk/news/localnews/pdenews/pdenews/tm\\_objectid=14549001&method=full&siteid=63858&headline=campaigners-want-sign-to-frown-on-speeding-drivers-name\\_page.html](http://icrenfrewshire.icnetwork.co.uk/news/localnews/pdenews/pdenews/tm_objectid=14549001&method=full&siteid=63858&headline=campaigners-want-sign-to-frown-on-speeding-drivers-name_page.html)

### **Study Finds Link Between Alcohol, Cocaine Use and Traffic Incidents**

New research by the Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health evaluated the occurrence of traffic violations and collisions before and after seeking treatment for alcohol, cannabis, and cocaine abuse. The researchers found that all three groups have significantly more traffic violations, and that the alcohol and cocaine groups demonstrated higher collision rates, which consequently, showed declines with treatment. Another study conducted by the Australian Centre for Drugs and Driving Swinburne University of Technology, which analyzed the last 50 years of research pertaining to the effects of alcohol and drugs on driving, found that alcohol not only increases the probability of a crash, but also increases the severity of injuries associated with these crashes.

Reference: "Traffic Injury Prevention," 2004. Ogden, E. Moskowitz, H.

### **British, Dutch Consider Radical Approaches to Traffic Safety**

A new and radical approach in Holland would reduce road signs and remove traffic lights, based on the belief that drivers should think for themselves and not rely on technology. One Dutch safety consultant says that too many warning signs make roads less safe because they encourage drivers not to think. Similarly, the British Transport and Road Research Laboratory says that altering roads to make them appear more dangerous also forces drivers to think for themselves and can consequently reduce crash rates. For example, experiments with removing central white lines on selected suburban roads cut crashes by a third. Read the full article at <http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/business.cfm?id=942502004>

### **Aussie Study Finds Health Promotion Approach Curbs Impaired Driving**

New research conducted by the Western Australian Centre for Health Promotion Research School of Public Health at Curtin University studied a health promotion approach to preventing alcohol-related traffic injuries. The study found that effective health promotion strengthens the skills and capabilities of individuals, groups, and communities, to take action and act collectively to control the determinants of alcohol-impaired driving. It also demonstrated the effectiveness of some health promotion components including, economic and retailer interventions, alcohol taxation, reducing alcohol availability, legal and

# road-wise workforce



legislative strategies, and strategies addressing the servers of alcohol. There was also evidence supporting sobriety checkpoints, lower BAC laws, minimum drinking age laws, and media promotion programs.

Reference: "Traffic Injury Prevention," 2004. Biscoe, S.



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