



## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers April 14, 2008

### Michigan News

#### **Booster Seat Legislation to Protect Michigan's Children**

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm recently signed legislation that will require the use of approved booster seats for children who are between the ages of four and eight and less than 4 feet 9 inches tall. The bill takes effect July 1, 2008. Current law requires children under age four to ride in an infant or child car seat. The new law extends the requirement to include older children who also are not optimally protected by seat belts alone. More information on child passenger safety can be found at [www.michigansafekids.org](http://www.michigansafekids.org)

#### **MDOT to Invest Eight Million in Safety Initiative for Centerline Rumble Strips on Rural Highways**

Recently, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) announced a three year, \$8 million safety initiative involving the installation of centerline rumble strips on 5,700 miles of rural, no-freeway roads across the state. MDOT also will add approximately 1,700 miles of shoulder rumble strips. Rumble strip installation will begin this construction season and will be completed in 2010.

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **Motorists Can Surf Web While on Road**

Novatel Wireless and AutoNet Mobile have partnered to turn cars into Wi-Fi hotspots. The companies will use CDMA EV-DO Rev A, wireless infrastructure to connect moving or stationary cars to the Internet. Monthly service starts at \$39. The product has been catching on gradually after it was introduced in Avis rental cars last year. AutoNet is working with Delphi Corporation to develop in-car telematics and entertainment products. The mobile phone infrastructure the companies are using has a head start over Mobile WiMax, a wide-area wireless technology that is just starting to roll out. For more information, go to

<http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=207000117>

Source: Information Week, March 27, 2008

#### **Preventable or Not?**

If someone in your organization has been involved in a work-related motor vehicle crash – and is contesting your ruling that the crash was preventable – take advantage of the National Safety Council's (NSC) Accident Review. This member-exclusive benefit is available and it can save you thousands in potential legal and/or arbitration fees. It's also a valuable educational tool to help you avoid similar crashes in the future. For additional information call NSC at 800-621-07619.

#### **Cell Phone Laws Likely Won't Make Drivers Any Safer**

As more states start passing hand-held cell phone bans for drivers, research shows that the legislation won't accomplish much. The risk stems not from taking hands off the wheel, but from "cognitive capture," being blind to driving cues because the driver's focus is on conversation. Some scientists say laws that allow only hands-free calls could make things worse by encouraging drivers to make more or longer calls. Drivers are four times more likely to be in a crash if they're using a cell phone, whether hand-held or hands-free. None of the 95 bills pending in 28 states would ban cell phones outright.



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### Consumer Advocates Claim Government Car-Safety Tests Need Improvements

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) star-based rating system has been around since 1994, and some consumer advocates are saying it's time for a change. "It no longer accomplishes its primary purpose—to identify those vehicles which are safer and those that are less safe—because all the vehicles now get four or five stars," said the executive director of the Center for Auto Safety. Consumer Reports puts more credence in the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's tests because they're more stringent. NHTSA acknowledges the need to change and wants to start by

improving front-impact and rollover tests. Other suggestions are to factor SUVs into side-impact testing and use 10 stars instead of five. For "The Car Book," the Center for Auto Safety used the NHTSA data but analyzed it in a different way and found significant differences. And because almost all cars get four or five stars, there's not much incentive for auto manufacturers to improve safety. For more information, go to

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23715862/> Source: MSNBC, March 20, 2008

### Electronic Onboard Recorders Can Increase Profits

Even though technologies that can preserve truck drivers' recorded hours, thereby helping prevent drowsy driving crashes, have been available for years, three of the four largest for-hire trucking firms don't use them. Electronic onboard recorders (EOBR) track drivers' movements to make sure they are following federal hours-of-service rules. "It's impossible to fudge the numbers," a transportation industry analyst said. "You can't claim you're resting when the truck is moving." Strictly enforcing hours-of-service rules could cut per-truck revenue and also increase driver compensation. Werner Enterprises adopted EOBR and actually reduced costs and increased profitability because the for-hire operator is able to schedule its fleet more efficiently. "Electronic recorders have enough political pressure that they will probably be mandated," said a vice president at American Trucking Associations. For more information, go to [http://computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&taxonomyName=hardware&articleId=313196&taxonomyId=12&intsrc=kc\\_feat](http://computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&taxonomyName=hardware&articleId=313196&taxonomyId=12&intsrc=kc_feat) Source: Computerworld, March 17, 2008

### Stronger Cars Harder to Get into After Crash

Automakers are using lighter and stronger materials to help save lives, but those same design elements are making it harder for rescue workers to reach people inside after a crash. Crews must work longer into the "golden hour" between crash and treatment by doctors. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says the trade-off is worth the lives saved. One solution to the problem, better rescue equipment, is also more expensive. Non-profit COMCARE Emergency Response Alliance designed a Web site that will offer schematics and safety specs for most cars on the road. The site allows rescue workers to open a laptop at the crash scene to get information about the car's construction, placement of air bags and other details. Source: Automotive Fleet e-News, March 21, 2008

### Forbes Names Top 5 Automobile Tech Trends

Five breaking trends in electronic technology will have a huge impact on cars in the coming years, according to Forbes. The first is in-car computing, including in-dash computers, Web surfing and e-mailing. MP3 player connectivity and hands-free Bluetooth integration will also be big. The other two trends are advanced GPS navigation and factory infusion, as more manufacturers add complex electronic devices at the factory. A study found that GPS navigation is the most-desired technology of the five, while Internet access is the least desired. Low-tech remote starting systems claimed the No. 1 spot. Source: Automotive Fleet e-News, March 21, 2008

### Officials Urge More Funding for All Modes of Transportation

Transportation advocates say the United States needs to spend more time and money on its overall transportation infrastructure. China and India spend about 8 percent of their gross domestic product on infrastructure each year, but the United States spends only 0.5 percent. James RePass, president of the National Corridors Initiative, recommends that Congress restructures its rail, highway and air committees along geographic lines. He says the country needs an overall transportation trust fund, not only the highway trust fund. Gilbert Carmichael, chair of the Intermodal Transportation Institute at the University of Denver, says railroads are critical to the nation's future. Projects such as



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building train stations at airports take some pressure off the highways and boost passenger traffic at the airport. Trains can carry freight across the country cheaper than trucks and with less fuel. He also says the privatization of toll roads and airports will play a role in the future. For more information, go to <http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/16633116.html>. Source: The Advocate, March 13, 2008

### **Federal Court Rules Employers Must Have Reason to Test Workers for Drugs**

Trying to maintain a drug-free workplace is not enough reason to require all employees to be drug tested, according to a decision by the Ninth U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco. The court ruled in favor of a woman whose job offer as a librarian was withdrawn when she refused a drug test. The appeals court said the city does have the right to test certain types of applicants, but there's no justification for testing librarians. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against sweeping drug tests in 1977.

Source: JoinTogether, March 17, 2008

### **Cities Start Turning off Red Light Cameras**

Some cities are shutting down their red-light cameras because they work too well. Drivers have stopped running red lights at intersections, which means citations and fines are down and local governments can't afford to operate the cameras. Dallas turned off a quarter of its least-profitable cameras because they weren't even paying for themselves. A federal study shows a reduction in injuries at intersections with cameras but an increase in rear-end crashes. Some officials point to the increase in rear-end crashes as a reason to disable the cameras. Rear-end crashes are more likely to be less serious with no or minor injuries, while the T-bone crashes that cameras help prevent tend to be more severe. For more information, go to <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23710970/>

Source: MSNBC, March 21, 2008

### **Road Pricing Supporters Release Study Showing Toll Roads are Safe, Popular**

Toll roads are safer than non-tolled roads, and the public supports both tolling and road pricing, according to two studies released by the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association. The association is the nation's leading advocate for tolling and road pricing. The first study found that toll roads, tunnels and bridges in the United States have a lower fatality rate than U.S. roads overall and than both urban and rural interstate highways. The second study summarizes findings from 110 surveys about public attitudes toward tolling. Among the surveys, 56 percent showed support for tolling; 31 percent reported opposition. For more information, go to [www.IBTTA.org](http://www.IBTTA.org)

### **Illinois Legislators Take Action to Reduce Distracted Driving**

Some legislators are trying to define distracted driving as they attempt to pass bills that would ban certain behaviors behind the wheel. Under Illinois Rep. Robert Pritchard's proposed legislation, sending text messages, changing clothes, applying makeup and reading a newspaper or map would all be banned while driving. Last year a law was passed that requires driver-education classes to cover "distracted driving as a major traffic safety issue." Secretary of State Jesse White is heading a task force that is hearing public testimony on the distracted driving issue. The taskforce plans to complete a report by July 1. For more information, go to <http://www.sj-r.com/News/stories/26843.asp>

### **GPS Devices Lead Some Drivers Astray**

Drivers who blindly trust their GPS devices are finding that satellite navigation is not infallible. Even when following the devices' directions, they're getting lost and running into dead ends. More people are using GPS systems as their prices fall—an estimated 49 million devices will be used in the United States this year. "Rather than trust our judgment of nature, we let technology tell us what's going on," a Stanford University communications professor said. Map data companies, which supply information to GPS makers, rely on transportation departments and public records to supplement what they find in the field. That information can become outdated quickly as businesses close, new roads are built and others are shut down for repairs. Some manufacturers and map data firms have places where users can report errors. Source: The Associated Press, March 18, 2008



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### **Vehicle-to-Vehicle Communication Faces Funding Hurdles**

Technology that allows vehicles to communicate with each other about road hazards could be in place within the next decade or two. Significant obstacles include funding, which could reach billions of dollars, and the fact that all major auto manufacturers and major cities must participate for it to be effective. Supporters of Vehicle Infrastructure Integration (VII) believe it could revolutionize vehicular travel and drastically reduce fatalities. In-vehicle devices would record speed, car position and rate of acceleration, as well as other important information. Some of that data would be transmitted to other vehicles and some to roadside units, which would then feed centralized computers. The computers would then analyze the information and send it back to roadside units and vehicles, all within milliseconds. Possible applications are vehicles with countdown timers to a light change and ones that warn the driver if they're going too fast for conditions. VII could also help reduce congestion. For more information, go to

<http://www.sacbee.com/103/story/811541.html> Source: Sacramento Bee, March 26, 2008

### **News from USDOT**

#### **More Truck Drivers Buckling Up**

The seat belt use rate for commercial vehicle drivers reached 65 percent in 2007, the highest level ever. In 2003, only 48 percent of truck drivers wore seat belts; that figure was 59 percent in 2006. The national belt use rate for drivers of passenger vehicles is 82 percent. U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters attributes the increase to a coalition formed in 2003 to address the issue and to a public service announcement featuring NASCAR driver Rusty Wallace. For more information, go to [www.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov)

#### **Secretary Proposes Funding to Promote Motorcycle Helmet Use**

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters, an avid motorcyclist, is pressing Congress to enact legislation that would encourage more states to pass motorcycle helmet laws. A helmet prevented Peters from suffering a brain injury two years ago when she crashed her Harley. Under Peters' proposal, states could use motorcycle safety funding to promote helmet use. States now are limited to using the money for safety training and awareness programs. Motorcycle fatalities have more than doubled in 10 years. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates helmets saved 1,658 lives in 2006, but 752 more lives could have been saved if all riders had worn helmets.

#### **Obese Truck Drivers May Get Tested for Sleep Apnea**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's medical review board will finalize recommendations about truck drivers and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) on April 7. Obesity is a major contributor to the condition, and the board is expected to recommend that commercial truckers must undergo a sleep study once they reach a certain level of obesity. The condition makes people wake up frequently during sleep because their airways partially close. This leaves sufferers unusually drowsy during waking periods, which can be especially risky for truck drivers. Commercial truckers have a higher incidence of the most severe form of OSA—20-30 percent, compared with 4 percent of men over age 40. Review board members are split over what level of obesity should be required for the sleep study. The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association opposes mandatory testing unless a direct causal relationship between obesity and OSA can be shown. For more information, go to [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-03-25-drowsy\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-03-25-drowsy_N.htm) Source: USA Today, March 25, 2008

### **International Traffic Safety News**

#### **UN Debates Road Safety Resolution**

The United Nations debated a landmark road safety resolution at UN Headquarters on March 31. The resolution's goal is to elevate road safety to the international priority level of AIDS, TB and malaria and lead to increased government support and funding. Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta, as well as three Nobel Peace Prize winners and others, are supporters. For more information, go to [www.makeroadssafe.org/us](http://www.makeroadssafe.org/us)



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### European Research Projects Tackle Head-on Crashes

Of the 40,000 people who die each year in traffic crashes in Europe, 20 percent are killed in head-on crashes. This type of crash is more likely to lead to multiple-car pile-ups, require huge rescue efforts and lead to more serious, lifelong injuries. PReVENT, the largest road safety research initiative in Europe, is developing technologies to prevent head-on crashes. Some of the projects' aims are to assist drivers with changing lanes, detecting objects in the blind spot and turning safely at intersections. Another initiative, PReVAL, tracks benefits against the cost and simplicity of a system to evaluate the return on investment. The most crucial to preventing head-on crashes are SASPENCE and WILLWARN. SASPENCE uses long-range sensors and map data to ensure a safe following distance. WILLWARN can detect hazardous road conditions and transmit that information to other vehicles. Both systems were found to be effective and popular with drivers and could be available in cars in the next two to three years. For more information, go to <http://cordis.europa.eu/ictresults/index.cfm/section/news/tpl/article/BrowsingType/Features/ID/89636> or <http://www.prevent-ip.org>

### Free Web Site Lets Businesses Track Gray Fleet

A free, Web-based risk management service will help companies manage gray fleet drivers more effectively. Cash Allowance Duty of Care Service is available online to all fleets and is provided by All-in-One Leasing. The service is supported by ads hosted on the site. Drivers who use their own cars on business are given a unique user name so they can log on and update records, undertake document checks and provide details of vehicle maintenance. Driving license checks are available for a small fee. Each company will have its own Web site complete with its gray fleet policy.

Source: FleetNews, March 18, 2008

### Telematics Allow Fleets to Pay Insurance Based on Use

Some fleets are becoming more and more interested in using telematics systems, which calculate premiums based on when and how each vehicle is driven, to reduce their insurance rates. Toad Group has stepped up trials of pay-per-use insurance telematics. The systems are fitted to more than 5,000 fleet vehicles in the United Kingdom and are being used by some fleets to negotiate cheaper premiums. "These telematics systems go further than just improving fleet management and fleet efficiencies," Toad's director of sales said. "They allow managers to manage risk and duty of care." Source: FleetNews, March 18, 2008

### Researchers Use Cell Phones to Track Traffic

Mobile phones could help monitor the status of traffic and report the information in real time. A research team from the National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre (Nectec) is working on software that would track a phone's movement from cell site to cell site to analyze traffic congestion. The pilot test is expected to have 200 volunteers, who would install the software on their phones. The data is sent through the phones GPRS network to Nectec automatically. The team also plans to test the system on 40 public buses. The team will then report the information back to drivers via a Web site and mobile phone networks. For more information, go to

[http://nationmultimedia.com/2008/03/25/technology/technology\\_30069047.php](http://nationmultimedia.com/2008/03/25/technology/technology_30069047.php)

Source: The Nation, March 25, 2008

### Psychology Plays Role in Traffic Crashes

To help prevent crashes, fleet managers need to understand what's going on inside their drivers' minds. Road safety charity Brake is organizing a workshop where delegates can learn from Dr. Lisa Dorn, an expert in driver behavior. "How a driver thinks and feels affects decision making," Dorn said. The workshop will explore psychology and how it relates to traffic crashes.

Source: FleetNews, March 26, 2008



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### **British Companies Lose Thousands on Tired Workers**

British employees are so tired that they're wasting an average of 151 minutes a day at work, according to a recent survey of office workers. Most employees aren't fully awake until 9:45 a.m., the study found. The wasted time costs businesses nearly £2,500 per person a year. Workers also admit to drinking at night during the week, with 88 percent being hungover at least once during the workweek. To boost energy, it is recommended that employees cut caffeine consumption, avoid drinking alcohol during the week and eat healthily. Source: FleetNews, March 26, 2008

### **Variable Message Signs Could Save Lives in Australia**

Because 45 people have died in 34 crashes since 2000 on a stretch of road in Queensland, the state government is turning to signs that change messages based on drivers' behaviors. For one example, if sensors linked to the signs detect that a driver is speeding, a message could flash warning the driver to slow down. The signs would also display general warnings about driver fatigue and road conditions. State and federal governments are funding the two-year project. "We are essentially trying to influence driver behavior as another means to manage safety," said the executive director of Main Roads. The "intelligent signage" is in the planning stage and should be erected by mid-2009. Source: Sunshine Coast Daily, March 26, 2008

### **Work-Home**

#### **Motorcyclist Deaths Rise as States Loosen Helmet Laws**

Since states began weakening motorcycle helmet laws a decade ago, crashes have risen steadily. The proportion of older riders killed has increased as well. Most states required all motorcyclists to wear helmets until the federal government stopped tying highway money to helmet laws in 1995. As states repealed or weakened the laws, the percentage of riders who wore helmets dropped and fatality rates increased. In 1996, 2,160 motorcyclists across the nation died; in 2006 that number rose to 4,810. Twenty years ago 47 states required helmets for adults, but now only 20 do. Three states don't require helmets for anyone. Critics of motorcycle helmet laws, such as ABATE, say riders should be able to make the choice without government interference. Federal statistics show that when a state weakens or repeals the law, helmet use drops. The National Transportation Safety Board last year recommended all states adopt motorcycle helmet laws. Last year five states took up bills that would require all motorcyclists to wear helmets; none of the bills passed. For more information, go to [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-03-26-bikehelmets\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-03-26-bikehelmets_N.htm) Source: Gannett News Service, March 26, 2008

#### **MADD Launches New Web Site for College Campuses**

Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the CarMax Foundation launched [www.umadd.org](http://www.umadd.org), a new Web site that provides tools for students interested in organizing campus-based groups. The site is also helpful for existing student groups, law enforcement initiatives on campus and campus and community leaders creating coalitions. Mini-grants are available for community-based groups committed to preventing underage drinking at college. The CarMax Foundation provided funding for the grants as well as stipends for 20 UMADD chapters. Source: NOYS Notable News, March 25, 2008

#### **Experts Produce Car-Buying Guide for Older Drivers**

AAA and the University of Florida developed a guide listing features that older drivers should consider when purchasing a new car. Tilt and telescoping steering wheels, adjustable pedals and power-operated seats are some of the recommended items because they help drivers stay comfortable and safe behind the wheel. The experts suggest thicker steering wheels, keyless entry systems and power mirrors for those with arthritis. Coupes should be avoided because their doors are heavier and harder to open and close. Other features to look for are gauges that are easy to read both night and day and controls that are large and easy to operate.

Source: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety e-Newsletter via Newsday, March 25, 2008



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### Underage Drinking Town Hall Meetings Scheduled this Spring

More than 1,600 town-hall meetings will take place across the country in March and April to address the problem of underage drinking. The meetings are sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Federal Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking, and state and local leaders. The first took place March 24 in Riverton, Wyo. "The problem is not going away on its own," Acting U.S. Surgeon General Steven K. Galson said. "Only by working together can we make a difference." The meetings are intended to raise awareness of underage drinking dangers and educate parents and community leaders how to fight the problem locally. For more information, go to [www.stopalcoholabuse.gov](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov)

Source: JoinTogether, March 25, 2008



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