road-wise workforce NETS TALK

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers
December 16, 2008

Michigan News

Happy Holidays
Michigan NETS wishes each of our members and their families a safe and joyous holiday season. Thanks to each of you for promoting traffic safety in the workplace. Our Michigan workforce is safer because of the good work you do to keep your employees safe both on and off the job.

Keep Your Eyes on the Road
This holiday season, pay special attention to law enforcement officers on our roadways. As police step up holiday safety patrols, motorists are urged to drive safely, and slow down and move over. Also, please focus on driving. Avoid talking on your cell phone, eating, or hunting for items in your vehicle while driving. When traveling 55 mph or faster, a two-second distraction can be deadly. Adjust your speed for road conditions, including snow and ice. And please, don't crowd the plow! Motorists should keep a safe distance between their vehicles and snowplows. Plowing may result in a cloud of snow, limiting visibility and may throw ice, rocks and salt. Always watch for the unexpected.

SHARE THE ROAD

Planners Lay Groundwork for Bicycle Interstate Network
State officials and bicycle enthusiasts are forming a vast network of more than 50,000 miles of bicycle routes that connect byways, cities and off-road trails. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, along with the Adventure Cycling Association and other groups, approved a plan that lays the foundation for the network. Now each state must create the routes and put up signs. "It's a great opportunity for the U.S. to establish what could be the largest bicycle route network in the world," said the executive director of the Adventure Cycling Group. Each corridor in the approved plan is 50 miles wide. The precise routes are yet to be designated, numbered and given signs. The proposed numbering system is opposite of interstate highways to avoid confusion. Europe's 38,000-mile EuroVelo is one-third complete. Quebec's 2,700-mile route was finished last year. For more information, go to http://www.adventurecycling.org/

Honda Tests Crash Alert System for Motorcyclists and Drivers
Honda demonstrated a motorcycle-to-car communication system that warns of impending crashes on a test track in October. Motorcyclists are alerted to approaching danger by lights at the windshield base and audibly through a Bluetooth-equipped helmet. In addition, drivers will be warned when a motorcycle is in a car's blind spot. A 1999 study of crashes in five European countries found half of the motorcycle crashes were the fault of the other driver, and a third were the fault of the motorcyclist. Of the crashes that car drivers caused, 72 percent claimed they didn't see the bike. Honda's motorcycle system is part of the Car 2 Car Communication Consortium. Honda has not said when, or if, the system will be available. For more information, go to http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/07/automobiles/07HANDLE.html
Source: The New York Times, December 7, 2008

Center Will Evaluate Pedestrian Guide for Neighborhoods
The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) of the University of North Carolina secured federal funding to evaluate a community guide intended to help neighborhoods establish pedestrian safety programs. The PBIC will give funding to 10 communities to follow the steps in the "Resident's Guide for Creating Safe and Walkable Communities." The goal is to give information, ideas, success stories and resources to help residents learn about issues that affect walking conditions. The guide contains fact sheets, worksheets and sample materials that can be distributed or adapted

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to meet the community's needs. The PBIC hopes to gain insight on the guide's usefulness and identify necessary improvements. The project also involves developing a site selection process for the communities receiving funding and an evaluation plan. For more information, go to http://www.hsrc.unc.edu/directions/2008/fall/pedsafety.htm.
Source: HSRC Directions, Fall 2008 issue

Latest Traffic Safety News

Most Poll Takers Know Louder Radio Volume Doesn't Prevent Drowsy Driving

Almost 40 percent of respondents answered incorrectly to the National Sleep Foundation's Web site poll about whether turning the radio up is an effective way to stay awake while driving. Most of the respondents, 62 percent, were correct that the statement is false. Turning up the radio, opening the window or turning on the air conditioner are not effective countermeasures. The best thing to do is to pull off the road in a safe rest area and take a 15- to 45-minute nap.
Source: NSF Alert, December 1, 2008

72 Vehicles are Top Safety Picks

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) named 72 vehicles Top Safety Picks for 2009. The number of awarded vehicles is twice that of 2008 and three times as many as in 2007. Top Safety Picks are vehicles that do the best job of protecting people in front, side and rear crashes based on Institute tests. Winners must have electronic stability control. Winners represented every class of vehicle, except for microcars. Ford and its Volvo subsidiary have 16 winners; Honda and Acura have 13; and Subaru has four. Chrysler is the only automaker that lacks a single winner.
Source: IIHS news release, November 25, 2008

Government Must Think of Roads' Future When Determining Funding

President-elect Barack Obama and Congress are contemplating massive new road and bridge spending to help the economy and solve longstanding infrastructure problems. But before deciding what to spend, they have to think about what kind of roads the country will need in the future and what kinds of vehicles will be driving on them. Self-directed cars could free drivers to perform other tasks when behind the wheel. Advanced roadway technology is becoming commonplace in large cities. The drive from downtown Washington, D.C. to Dulles International Airport showcases traffic cameras, sensors to adjust traffic signals and tolls that can be paid electronically. The Transportation Department has funded several projects aimed to counter congestion, reduce energy costs and help the environment. The government could speed up adoption of collision avoidance systems, perhaps as a provision of the auto industry bailout.
Source: Congressional Quarterly, November 30, 2008

People Living Near High-Traffic Areas Face Heart Problems

The latest evidence that heavy traffic can cause heart damage comes from a German study published in Circulation. Researchers found that people who live near heavy traffic are more likely to develop atherosclerosis, the hardening of the arteries, which can lead to a heart attack, stroke or death. Prolonged exposure to elevated levels of air pollution reduced overall life expectancy by a few years. The closer people lived to high-traffic areas, the higher their risk of coronary artery calcification. Besides moving away, the most effective preventive measures include keeping blood pressure and diabetes in check, lowering cholesterol, exercising and quitting smoking. For more information, go to http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/30/AR2008113000769.html
Source: Washington Post, November 30, 2008

Study Shows Talking on Cell Phone More Dangerous Than Talking to a Passenger

A new report finds that drivers talking on a cell phone are more distracted and prone to error than if they were speaking to a friend in the passenger seat. "When you have a person sitting next to you who is experienced as a driver, that person actually understands something about traffic, supports you actively in dealing with traffic," the study's author said. Before the University of Utah study, little research had been done on the effects of talking to a person in the vehicle. Each of the 41 participants, aging from 18 to 26, was paired with a friend and asked to navigate a 24-mile stretch of highway on a simulator. Participants either called people they knew on a hands-free cell phone, talked with a

passenger or had no conversation at all. Half of the drivers talking on the cell phone missed an exit they were supposed to take, while only 1 in 8 who were talking to passengers made the same mistake. For more information, go to http://www.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=621873 Source: HealthDay, December 2, 2008

Red-Light Cameras Reduce Crashes, Texas Study Finds

Texas intersections with red-light cameras had an overall 30 percent decrease in crashes, according to a statewide study by Texas A&M University's Texas Transportation Institute. Researchers examined data from 56 intersections across the state from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. The study examined crashes at intersections from 12 cities that were required to report collisions under a state law. Right angle crashes were reduced by 43 percent, while rear-end crashes increased by 5 percent. The figures confirm what experts predicted during the 2007 legislative session. The data gives ammunition to those who back red-light cameras, saying they're an inexpensive way to enforce traffic laws at intersections and free officers to patrol other areas. Houston has made millions from more than 387,000 citations issued since September 2006. A portion goes to the camera vendor, and at least $5.1 million goes into a state fund for regional trauma centers. The city must spend most of its net profit on traffic safety. For more information, go to http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/6144100.html Source: Houston Chronicle, December 3, 2008

Courts Accept Evidence from GPS, Black Boxes

Drivers have come to regard their cars as mobile extensions of their homes and expect a right to privacy, but the courts tend to disagree. Global positioning systems and "black box" data event recorders keep newer vehicle models under surveillance at all times, providing evidence that can place a suspect at the scene of a crime or prove liability in a crash. GPS units keep position tracks that create a record of a person's movements, while event data records note speed, braking, signaling and other behaviors. Police and prosecutors hail the technologies as powerful investigative tools, but privacy right activists warn they're too intrusive. "Tracks of third parties, or of their property, without their knowledge are probably inadmissible and even illegal unless the tracks are conducted by law enforcement," a Wisconsin attorney said. The evidence could be used to exonerate suspects, too. Courts consistently have upheld that citizens can't expect privacy when traveling on public roads. For more information, go to http://features.csmonitor.com/innovation/2008/12/09/the-gps-as-dashboard-snitch
Source: The Christian Science Monitor, December 9, 2008

AAA Foundation Surveys Drivers about Cell Phone Use

The AAA Foundation's Traffic Safety Culture Index shows more than half of U.S. drivers report using a cell phone while driving in the past 30 days, and one in seven admits to text messaging while driving. The telephone survey also found that young drivers were overwhelmingly more likely than older drivers to text. Higher levels of education were associated with higher levels of cell phone use and text messaging while driving. Many Americans believe that drivers using cell phones are a serious traffic safety problem, but a substantial portion of people with that view admit doing so at least occasionally. About two-thirds of drivers who use cell phones say hands-free sets are safer, though evidence suggests otherwise. For more information, go to http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/CellPhonesandDrivingReport.pdf
Source: AAA FTS, December 2008

Professor Calls Traffic Signs a Safety Threat

U.S. highway fatalities are high because speed limits and stop signs have distracted drivers, a Duke University professor told the UAB Transportation Center. "Traffic signals are not just annoying; they are dangerous," said John Staddon, who has a Ph.D. in experimental psychology. "Americans are trained to pay attention to the sign—not to the road." Signs divert the driver's attention from the road, because the signs are placed off to the side. In England, planners paint signs across the travel lane and use roundabouts. There were 36 percent more fatalities per mile of road in the U.S. than in the United Kingdom in 2003. Staddon also said using four-way stops to slow traffic is not a good use of the signs and that speed limits change too frequently in the U.S., training drivers to look for them. In addition, Staddon maintains that cruise control is unsafe because it takes control away from the driver. For more information, go to http://www.al.com/birminghamnews/stories/index.ssf?/base/news/1228900608119920.xml&coll=2

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Source: The Birmingham News, December 10, 2008

Advancing Technologies

Israeli Crash-Avoidance Technology Company Fares Well in Uncertain Times

Despite turmoil in the automotive industry, Israeli startup Mobileye Vision Technology has signed several major contracts in recent weeks for its Accident Warning and Control System (AWACS). The technology is an early alert system that notifies drivers if they have swerved from a lane or gotten too close to another vehicle. It sounds an audible signal as the car comes within a 2.5-second distance from the vehicle ahead, giving the driver enough time to react. AWACS uses a single high-speed camera sensor and pattern recognition to analyze a constant stream of static and data from the driving environment. "Fortunately for us, even in hard times innovation is crucial for the highly competitive auto industry, and safety is an area where the major players are not skimping," said Amnon Shashua, Mobileye's cofounder. The company is working with automakers to incorporate the technology and started selling it in the aftermarket to existing vehicle owners for about $1,000 a unit. By the end of the year, Mobileye expects AWACS to be integrated in several hundred thousand vehicles and predicts that number will grow into the millions in two years. Its work force has doubled, and Mobileye is still hiring to meet consumer demand. The market for driver safety systems will be in the billions in just a few years. For more information, go to http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/dec2008/gb20081210_946626.htm?chan=globalbiz_europe+index+page_top+stories Source: BusinessWeek, December 10, 2008

Commuters

Most Small Towns with Bad Commutes are in Washington, D.C. Area

Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Forbes found that many of the worst commutes begin in towns on the fringes of big cities. Linton Hall, Va. is the worst small town for commuters: 78 percent of residents who drive alone each day take an average of 46.3 minutes to get to work. The town is in the Washington, D.C. area, by far the worst part of the country for small-city commutes. Of the 100 small towns with the worst commutes, 18 are in Maryland and 10 are in Virginia. Illinois comes in second, with 16 suburbs of Chicago making the 100 worst cities list. The longest commutes seem to be car-centric, and the shortest are in walkable communities. For more information, go to http://www.forbes.com/vehicles/2008/12/09/commute-traffic-town-forbeslife-cx_jb_1209commute.html
Source: Forbes, December 9, 2008

News from USDOT

FMCSA Issues Rules about Medical Examinations for Commercial Drivers

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued a final rule that requires states to merge CDL and the driver's medical examination certification into a single electronic record. The rule, when fully implemented in three years, will provide instant electronic access to the CDL holder's medical certificate by state and federal enforcement officials. States would have to take action against CDL holders if they fail to provide medical certification status information by the deadline. FMCSA also issued a rulemaking that would establish a National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners to ensure that CDL holders' physical qualification exams are performed uniformly and consistently by qualified practitioners. The proposed rule would create certification standards, including a training and testing program. For more information, go to www.fmcsa.dot.gov Source: FMCSA news release, December 1, 2008

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U.S. DOT Predicts Fewer Traffic Fatalities in 2008

The number of people killed in traffic crashes is expected to reach a record low in 2008, U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters said. Early projections show an almost 10 percent drop in traffic deaths in the first 10 months of 2008. "Our focus on safety—from our highways, railways, seaways and airways—has led to one of the safest periods in our nation's transportation history," Secretary Peters said. This is the first time the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is able to project fatality figures before the end of the calendar year. The Department is working to make projections in near real time. Early estimates show 31,110 people died on the nation's roads from January through October, compared to 34,502 during the same time period in 2007. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled for the first nine months is 1.28, compared to 1.37 for 2007. NHTSA intends to update 2008 estimates regularly as more data becomes available. The final count will be available in summer 2009. For more information, go to http://www.dot.gov/affairs/SafetyFactSheet.htm Source: USDOT news release, December 11, 2008

FHWA Issues Pedestrian Safety Report to Congress

In its pedestrian safety report to Congress, the Federal Highway Administration notes that of the nearly 43,000 highway deaths in 2006, 4,784 were pedestrians. Nearly all of the technologies and improvements assessed to mitigate pedestrian crashes are in some stage of development and are not yet market ready. They require more research and extensive field testing. Further research is also necessary to determine where the technologies should be deployed. States need this information to match the proper technology to specific pedestrian crash problems they face. Once proven, the technologies could be incorporated into enforcement and public education campaigns. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has been working with the international community to develop global technical regulation to reduce leg and head injuries when the front of the vehicle strikes a pedestrian. A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will come a few months after the vote in November. For more information, go to http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/pedrpt/pedrpt_0808/pedrept_0808.pdf. Source: FHWA report, released December 2008

International Traffic Safety News

Driving Techniques Could Save Companies Billions

The Energy Saving Trust estimates that drivers in the United Kingdom could save more than £5 billion in fuel by adopting smarter driving techniques. The Trust launched a smarter driving training course aimed at employees to help companies secure their share of the savings. Companies that shift to cars emitting 160g/km or less could significantly reduce their business tax bill. Green driving practices also encourage safer driving and unlock additional savings worth millions by reducing crashes, lost production time and insurance costs. Overall, the cost to industry for work-related crashes is about £3 billion. Source: Company Car Driver, December 2, 2008

Orthodox Priests Lecture Russian Drivers Who Disobey Traffic Laws

Traffic police and Orthodox priests in Penza, a region in Central Russia, have teamed up to improve traffic safety and curb the high rate of road deaths. When motorists are pulled over, they will be offered a sermon by an "on-duty" priest instead of receiving a fine. The priests will serve along with officers as part of a campaign launched in Kuznetsk, a large town in the region. "We already can say that traffic accidents have declined by 30 percent," a senior traffic police officer said. Road deaths and drunk driving are far more common in Russia than in Europe. A priest in the Siberian city Tyumen drove through the streets reading prayers through loudspeakers during the UN Global Road Safety Week in April. The Interior Ministry said 20,992 people died and about 200,000 were injured in crashes from January to September of this year, a decline from 2007. For more information, go to http://www.mnweekly.ru/national/20081205/55359975.html Source: RIA Novosti, December 5, 2008

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Work-Home

Most Doctors Don't Discuss High-Risk Behaviors with Teens

Physicians are ignoring national health guidelines by failing to discuss high-risk behavioral issues, such as alcohol use and safety concerns, with teens, the Center for the Advancement of Health reports. Researchers surveyed more than 2,000 12- to 17-year-olds about whether their physician had discussed tobacco, alcohol and other drug use, use of seat belts and helmets as well as other topics. "More than 80 percent of teens did not discuss safety issues like seat belts and helmets, and at least 70 percent did not discuss substance abuse," the study's lead author said. Federal guidelines state that doctors should "provide screening and guidance about high-risk health behaviors." The study appeared in the Journal of Adolescent Health. Source: JoinTogether, December 4, 2008

GPS Evidence Used to Confirm Radar Data in Court

A GPS system installed on a teen's car could bolster the case against him in court. Shaun Malone, 18, was ticketed for going 62 mph in a 45-mph zone. The GPS unit in his vehicle shows speed and location once every 30 seconds, not in a continuous stream. It shows he stopped at a light and was driving 45 mph 2,040 feet down the road 30 seconds later. An expert witness testified that to drive that distance in 30 seconds, Malone would have needed to accelerate faster than 45 mph and that the evidence is consistent with the officer's radar reading. "The GPS data and the radar data do not contradict each other," the expert said. "That is the fundamental realization in this case." For more information, go to http://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/20081206/NEWS/812060371/1016/SPORTS0401?Title=GPS_may_support_speeding_ticket Source: The Press Democrat, December 6, 2008

Teens Create Winning Traffic Safety Awareness Campaigns

The U.S. Department of Transportation partnered with the National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS) on a nationwide competition that challenged teens to develop ad campaigns to spread the message of traffic safety to their peers. Students from Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley High School in Gibson City, Ill. developed the winning campaign, which will be used as part of National Youth Traffic Safety Month in 2009. Anoka High School of Anoka, Minn. and Clifton High School of Clifton, Ill. took second and third places. Prize money of $5,000 for the winning school, $2,000 for second place and $1,000 for third place will be used to support traffic safety activities or to provide scholarships for student leaders. The winning schools created dynamic PSAs, brought in guest speakers and hosted information sessions. The Gibson City high school used television and radio PSAs to urge seat belt use, bicycle and railroad safety in their community. The group's student leader worked with officials to raise awareness about dangerous intersections. For more information, go to http://fastlane.dot.gov/2008/12/teens-talk-to-t.html Source: USDOT Official Blog, December 9, 2008

US DOT Creates Facebook Group

In an attempt to reach teens in new and innovative ways, the U.S. Department of Transportation created a Facebook group. The pilot teen-oriented group is called Keys to Drive. It's a place where teens can connect and share safe-driving tips, advocacy strategies and real-life stories. People can join the group to become a "fan" at www.facebook.com
Source: NOYS email alert, December 11, 2008

Traffic Crashes Top Cause of Fatal Injuries to Children Worldwide

Nearly a million children around the world die every year as a result of unintentional injuries, and traffic crashes are the biggest killer, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report. Traffic crashes kill 260,000 children a year and injure about 10 million. Being on the road or in a car is dangerous for children anywhere around the world, but especially in developing countries. The rate of death was highest in low- and middle-income countries, especially Africa, where children haven't been taught about the dangers of traffic and aren't prepared when a new road is built. In Asia, deaths are most often caused by two-wheel motorized vehicles; in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, it's common to see entire families on one motorcycle. In the United States and Western countries, deaths have declined because of seat belt use, helmets and child safety seats. Source: NPR, December 10, 2008

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