



## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers December 3, 2007

### Michigan News You Can Use

#### **Court of Appeals Makes Ruling**

The Michigan Court of Appeals has finally clarified the language in MCL 257.648 requiring the use of a signal when changing lanes, or "turning from a direct line." The ruling requires drivers to use a turn signal when changing lanes on a highway and is not unconstitutionally vague." The full decision can be accessed at:

[http://www.icle.org/shared/asp/display\\_mi\\_law\\_news\\_opinion.asp?FILENAME=/mlo/michapp/slip/O-278053.xml](http://www.icle.org/shared/asp/display_mi_law_news_opinion.asp?FILENAME=/mlo/michapp/slip/O-278053.xml)

#### **Governor signs bill**

Last month Governor Granholm signed Senate Bill 79, which became Public Act 143. This bill removes the requirement that a person sign their registration certificate. The bill was filed with the Secretary of State, and was passed with immediate effect. For more information link to:

[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(ha4snjqxtunvnp2drvdhz545\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=getobject&objectname=2007-sb-0079&queryid=20856846](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(ha4snjqxtunvnp2drvdhz545))/mileg.aspx?page=getobject&objectname=2007-sb-0079&queryid=20856846)

#### **What is the law in Michigan regarding the age and or weight a child should be before they can ride in the front seat?**

**Answer:** Children of any age and weight can ride in the front seat - there is no law that prohibits them from doing so. However, the back seat is the safest place for children under age 12 to ride.

Michigan law requires:

- Children from birth through age three must be properly restrained in a child safety seat in the vehicle.
- Children who are four years old but less than sixteen years old must use a safety belt no matter where they are riding in the vehicle.

Booster seats are recommended for children ages 4-8, or until 4'9" tall (57 inches). Booster seats help the lap and shoulder belts of the safety belt fit correctly, therefore protecting the child more effectively.

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **NHTSA Plans Impaired Driving Crackdown during Holiday Season**

A national impaired driving crackdown will run from Dec. 15-31 to curb alcohol- and drug-related crashes over the holidays. An event in the Washington, D.C. area will kick off the campaign on Dec. 18. An \$8 million paid media buy will support the "Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest." theme. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration posted its 2007 planner that contains artwork and earned media materials at <http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org/planners/Holiday2007/index.cfm>



Dan Vartanian  
NETS Coordinator  
Office of Highway Safety Planning  
(517) 333-5322  
vartanid@michigan.gov  
www.michigan.gov/michnets





### **Ford, Honda Models Top List of Safest Vehicles**

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) released its annual “Top Safety Picks,” and Ford and Honda came out on top. The Toyota Tundra was the first full-size pickup to make the annual list. As automakers increase safety standards, more vehicles are making the list—34 appear for 2008, a jump from 13 in 2007. More vehicles would have made the list if they were equipped with better head restraints. Eight Ford and seven Honda models were designated top safety picks. IIHS plans to continue toughening its “Top Safety Picks” program. For more information, go to <http://www.detroitnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071115/AUTO01/711150354/1148/AUTO01>  
Source: The Detroit News, November 15, 2007

### **Researchers Find Correlation between Weak Seat Belt Laws, High Rural Fatality Rates**

The University of Minnesota Center for Excellence in Rural Safety released a report that shows a strong connection between states without strong seat belt laws and states with a high proportion of rural road fatalities. For more information, go to <http://www.ohsonline.com/articles/56243/>

### **Tips Help Employers Keep Their Workers Productive, Alert**

Employers can do several things to ensure workers are alert on the job and on the road. The first is to encourage exercise, one of the most popular and effective things a company can do to increase morale and improve an employee’s mood, health and sleep. Companies can also keep the work environment as well lit as possible, because exposure to bright light results in improved alertness. Another suggestion is to set up a post-work rest room where employees can take a nap before driving home. The set-up can be simple—two or three recliners, cots or mattresses are all that is needed. The room can also be used for controlled napping: Workers could nap there during their allotted break time to increase productivity while working. Ergonomic yet not-too-comfortable furniture will help employees stay alert and pain-free. Shift supervisors should be trained to recognize when workers are nodding off and remedy the problem. Source: Circadian Technologies, Inc., Managing 24/7, November 28, 2007

### **TRB Issues Circular about Alcohol Regulation**

The Transportation Research Board released a circular titled “Traffic Safety and Alcohol Regulation: A Symposium.” It’s an overview of a June 2006 symposium that explored the role of alcohol regulation in traffic safety. Discussions among symposium participants are examined, and background papers are included. For more information, go to <http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/circulars/ec123.pdf>

### **Group Forms To Spread Word about Moving Over**

When drivers head home for the holidays, they should remember to slow down and move over as they pass police officers, first responders and tow truck drivers on the side of the road. Federal, state and local officials launched the National Unified Goal for Traffic Incident Management (NUG) just in time for the busy holiday season. The agencies will work together to improve first responder safety, ensure quick clearance of highways and communicate promptly with each other. The group will also work with Congress to help members better understand the importance of funding for better data collection. For more information, go to [http://cms.firehouse.com/web/online/News/Push-Made-for-Responder-Safety-on-Highways/46\\$57185](http://cms.firehouse.com/web/online/News/Push-Made-for-Responder-Safety-on-Highways/46$57185) or [http://www.transportation.org/sites/ntimc/docs/NUG\\_%20Press%20Release\\_Nov%2020\\_2007.pdf](http://www.transportation.org/sites/ntimc/docs/NUG_%20Press%20Release_Nov%2020_2007.pdf)  
Source: Firehouse.com, November 20, 2007

### **Crashes, Citations Drop after Dallas Installs Red-Light Cameras**

In the first six months of their operation, Dallas’ red-light cameras have reduced crashes and citations. In 2006, nearly 30 percent of all crashes at traffic signals in Dallas were related to running a red light. That led to 14 fatalities, 75 serious injuries and 487 minor injuries. Dallas now has 60 red-light running



Dan Vartanian  
NETS Coordinator  
Office of Highway Safety Planning  
(517) 333-5322  
vartanid@michigan.gov  
www.michigan.gov/michnets





cameras, and T-bone crashes at those intersections have dropped by 75 percent. Rear-end crashes were reduced 57 percent. The number of citations also has dropped, showing that drivers are changing their behavior. Dallas officials plan to install 40 more cameras by next summer. For more information, go to [http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/DN-redlight\\_20met.ART.State.Edition1.3712d45.html](http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/DN-redlight_20met.ART.State.Edition1.3712d45.html) Source: The Dallas Morning News, November 20, 2007

### **MADD's Campaign Helps States Pass Ignition Interlock Legislation**

In the first year of MADD's Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving, four states passed laws that mandate the use of ignition interlock devices for convicted drunk drivers. Thirty others are considering similar legislation. "In order to keep those first-time offenders from becoming the repeat offenders, ignition interlocks must be implemented in every state nationwide," said Glynn Birch, MADD's national president. Currently five states have no provision for using ignition interlocks, and 11 bar sobriety checkpoints. Source: Join Together, November 21, 2007

### **States, Employers Start Enacting Text Messaging Bans**

Washington and New Jersey are the first states to ban texting while driving. While laws regarding cell phone and other electronic use vary across the country, some companies are banning their employees from using them while behind the wheel. Distracted driving is a factor in 80 percent of crashes, according to the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). A NHTSA study found drivers are three times more likely to crash when text messaging. Some employers see the dangers of texting while driving as common sense and don't write specific policies, but others need to be more clear-cut. An industrial safety consultant recommends the following language: "Employees are prohibited from texting or making use of electronic mail functions while the vehicle is in motion. This prohibition includes the time waiting for a traffic signal to change." Source: SHRM's HR Week, November 19, 2007

### **Drivers Report Difficulty Seeing at Night but Few Seek Treatment**

About a third of drivers have trouble seeing while driving in the dark, but many have never asked a doctor about treatment options. More than a quarter reported difficulty seeing traffic signs, and a fifth had trouble seeing animals or pedestrians, according to the survey conducted by Kelton Research for Road & Travel Magazine and ACUVUE contact lenses. Vision problems and discomfort left 24 percent feeling concerned and 21 percent unsafe when driving at night. Eyestrain was the No. 1 complaint at 38 percent. Only talking on the phone or text messaging was seen as a bigger distraction than vision problems while driving in the dark. For more information, go to [http://www.acuvue.com/pdf/blinded\\_by\\_light.pdf](http://www.acuvue.com/pdf/blinded_by_light.pdf)

### **News from USDOT**

#### **Automakers Ask NHTSA To Delay Side-Impact Crash Rule**

In September the National Highway Safety Administration adopted a rule to help protect people in side-impact crashes, but automakers are asking for more time to redesign models and run tests. The rule requires new air bag systems and sets tougher crash-test standards. It would save about 300 lives a year and prevent 360 serious injuries. NHTSA plans to phase it in over four years starting in September 2009. The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers asked for a later start date of September 2011. The alliance also wants to wait until September 2016 to apply the rule to convertibles. GM also approached NHTSA to ask for changes, including setting a lower limit for when the air bags would deploy. Source: Detroit Free Press, November 6, 2007



Dan Vartanian  
NETS Coordinator  
Office of Highway Safety Planning  
(517) 333-5322  
vartanid@michigan.gov  
www.michigan.gov/michnets





### **Former NASCAR Champion Stars in CMV Seat Belt Ad**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is launching a new public service announcement starring former NASCAR driver Rusty Wallace. The “Be Ready. Be Buckled.” spot will encourage truck drivers to wear their seat belts. Only 59 percent of commercial vehicle drivers wear their belts, even though they’re required to by law. In 2006, 45 percent of truck drivers killed in a crash were not buckled up. For a wealth of resources on commercial motor vehicle safety link to: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/safety-belt/index.htm>

### **Work-Home**

#### **Feds Propose New Rules for School Buses**

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters announced a new federal proposal that would require higher seat backs and set new seat belt standards for school buses. A year after the rule goes into effect, all new school buses would have 24-inch seat backs, an increase from the current 20 inches. The seats will help keep adults and older children from being thrown over seats in a crash. Also, new small buses would be equipped with three-point belts within three years of the rule taking effect. Currently only lap belts are required. Federal standards will be available for adding belts to large buses. School districts could use federal highway safety funds to cover the cost of equipping buses with seat belts. Public comments on the proposal will be accepted for 60 days. For more information, go to [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

#### **Rural Teens Too Young To Drive Drink and Drive at Alarming Rate**

Researchers surveyed 290 middle-school students in the Mississippi Delta and found that 17 percent of the students drove a car after drinking. In the past five months, 45 percent of the students rode with a driver who had been drinking. “No one thought to look at risky driving behaviors in kids who weren’t old enough to drive,” the study’s lead author said. “We assume that because it’s illegal for them to have a license that they don’t drive—even though we know they’re doing other illegal things such as drinking.” Early drinking and other risky behaviors tend to happen more in rural areas because there aren’t as many out-of-school activities. Rural kids also are usually more familiar with motorized vehicles such as ATVs and farm equipment. The study is in the November issue of Accident Analysis & Prevention. Source: NOYS Notable News, November 19, 2007

#### **Wisconsin Shares Research on Reaching Young Adults**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation offers a summary of research about how to communicate with young adults about transportation topics. For more information, go to [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/library/research/docs/tsrs/tsryouthcommunications.pdf](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/library/research/docs/tsrs/tsryouthcommunications.pdf)

#### **Illinois Drivers Can Become Buckle Buddies by Reporting Unrestrained Children**

Illinois created a toll-free number for motorists to anonymously report unrestrained children. By calling the Buckle Buddy hotline at 1-888-800-2642, other drivers can leave a message about unbuckled children and provide a license plate number, date and vehicle description. Reported drivers will then receive a letter and child passenger safety information; they will not get a ticket. For more information, go to <http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=84159> or <http://www.childrenshospitalofil.org/top/families/Be+A+Buckle+Buddy.htm>



## International Traffic Safety News

### **Law Enforcement in UK To Investigate Company Involvement in Crashes**

Police in the United Kingdom are gearing up to investigate companies whose vehicles are involved in crashes. The campaign is an attempt to reduce the 1,000 fatal crashes a year that involve work vehicles. Officers will investigate whether the company conducted basic checks and will ask managers whether they forced employees to drive while tired. Starting in April, companies can be prosecuted under the Corporate Manslaughter Act, which makes it easier to sue corporations that cause death through negligence. According to the Department for Transport, about 300 people are killed a year as a result of drowsy driving crashes, and 40 percent of those crashes involve someone driving for work. About a third of company cars are involved in a crash each year. For more information, go to <http://www.caremotoring.co.uk/category/company-drivers> Source: Care Motoring, November 3, 2007

### **UK Police Underreport Work-related Crashes**

Although it is widely accepted that a third of all crashes in the United Kingdom involve an at-work driver, the reporting system police use shows only 17 percent of crashes last year involved on-the-clock employees. Road safety organizations and government agencies are concerned the system, called Stats 19, is underreporting the extent of the problem. In 2005 the Health and Safety Executive added a section to the Stats 19 form about whether those involved in a crash were at work, but the figures remain unreliable. "This could be a major issue for fleet managers trying to persuade their board to take action if these new figures are used by the board to undermine their argument as to the scale of the problem," a road safety consultant said. The Stats 19 form will be reviewed again in 2010. Source: FleetNewsNet, November 14, 2007

### **Fleet Managers Cite Reducing Costs, Increasing Safety as Top Priorities**

When more than 100 fleet decision makers were asked what issues dominate their workloads, 41 percent said cutting operating costs was their most important objective, and 38 percent said reducing business risk was most important. For second choices, 21 percent picked cost reduction and 25 percent chose business risk reduction. Rising fuel prices led 82 percent of the respondents to say reducing fuel costs is a priority within overall cost control. ALD Automotive conducted the survey. "Given the government, police and Health and Safety Executive focus on encouraging businesses to put in place robust measures to reduce the number of road crashes involving at-work drivers, we were not surprised that fleet operators saw at-work driving safety as a major priority area," ALD Automotive's marketing director said. Source: FleetNewsNet, November 29, 2007

### **Survey Finds Drivers Unsure How Much Alcohol is Too Much**

A third of British motorists don't know how many units of alcohol are in a pint of beer and how it can affect blood-alcohol level, according to a survey by Direct Line Car Insurance. About half were unaware of the potency and effects of a large glass of wine. Forty percent of the respondents said drinking alcohol before driving should be banned entirely because of the confusion over how much alcohol is safe before driving. Part of the misunderstanding is because alcohol consumption is measured in units, but the drunk driving limit is measured by blood alcohol content.

Source: Join Together, November 28, 2007

### **Employers Should Take Several Steps To Help Employees with Drug Problems**

Drugs and alcohol abuse takes a toll on employees, but it also affects the corporations they work for. "Misuse can lead to short and long-term absenteeism from work, increased likelihood of illness, lateness, poor work performance and lower productivity," a Grendonstar consultant said. Drug- and alcohol-related problems cost British industry as much as £3 billion a year. Companies can act by



Office of Highway Safety Planning

Dan Vartanian  
NETS Coordinator  
Office of Highway Safety Planning  
(517) 333-5322  
vartanid@michigan.gov  
www.michigan.gov/michnets



Network of Employers  
For Traffic Safety



assessing the business risk, developing a policy, creating an awareness and training program, developing testing procedures, implementing the policy and training managers and monitoring the policy on an ongoing basis. Myths many employers believe are that their employees would never drink and drive a company vehicle; a driver has to be over the limit to be convicted; it's only a problem around the holidays; and there's a policy banning drinking and driving, so the company's covered.

Source: FleetNewsNet, November 26, 2007

### **Education Will Continue for Company Car Drivers**

The UK's Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is revamping its driver education program, and one of its new focuses is continuing education for fleet drivers. "We need to do more to help drivers develop and maintain standards for life, especially for those driving for work," DSA's chief executive said. Proposals will be published in the next few weeks, and company car drivers can expect to be targeted in the coming months. A four-pronged approach will cover education, training, testing and driving for life.

Source: Company Car Driver, November 23, 2007

### **Employers Need To Remind Workers of Risk of Driving Morning after Drinking**

Companies should have an impaired driving policy in place before the holidays. Those with an existing policy are encouraged to remind drivers about the risks of drinking and driving and the increasing number of people who are convicted of driving the morning after a night of drinking. Almost a fifth of convictions are on the way to or at work, often in a company vehicle. Police now are allowed to conduct field sobriety tests in the UK to determine whether a driver is impaired.

Source: Company Car Driver, November 20, 2007