



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers June 5, 2007

Latest Traffic Safety News

Summer Travel Period is Most Deadly Time of the Year to Drive

Memorial Day kicked off the summer travel season, which is the deadliest time on the nation's roads. Nationally about 270 more people die each month in traffic crashes during the summer than other times of the year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Twenty of the deadliest 25 days in the past five years fell between Memorial Day and Labor Day. To download the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety's "Safe Driving Tips for Summer Travel" flyer for your employees, go to www.trafficsafety.org

What Does a Yellow Light Mean? Many Drivers Don't Know

It seems millions of American drivers could use a refresher course on the rules of the road. One in six licensed drivers would not pass their written road test if they had to take it today, according to results from the 2007 GMAC Insurance National Drivers Test. New York drivers scored lowest and Idaho drivers the highest on the test, which consisted of actual questions from state exams. The national average was 77.1 percent. Drivers had particular trouble with two questions: proper following distance from the car ahead (2 seconds) and what to do when approaching a yellow light (stop if it is safe to do so). For more information, go to <http://www.gmacinsurance.com/SafeDriving/2007/PressRelease.asp>
Source: GMAC, May 24, 2007

AAA's New CarFit Program Helps Older Drivers Adjust Their Vehicles

To ensure older drivers' safety on the road, AAA's new CarFit program helps seniors properly adjust their vehicles. The educational program will consist of free car fittings in several states, brochures and a new Web site. Fittings focus on safety belt use, steering wheel tilt, mirror adjustment and positioning to air bag, among others. CarFit can also assist seniors who have trouble reaching the shoulder harness and buckling the seat belt, looking over their shoulder to change lanes and entering or exiting the vehicle comfortably. For more information, go to <http://www.aaaexchange.com/Main/Default.asp?CategoryID=3&SubCategoryID=38&ContentID=340&zip=20854>

Safer Vehicles Could Lead to Reckless Driving

Based on 21 years of NASCAR data, a professor from West Virginia University thinks safer cars lead to more crashes. He says the reason is all in peoples' heads—if they feel protected, they're more likely to drive carelessly. "How do you think people would drive if we got rid of seat belts and installed metal daggers sticking out of the steering wheel?" Professor Russell Sobel asked. "Most people would say, 'I'm not going to be tailgating.'" NASCAR crashes increased from the early 1970s to the early 1990s, but injuries decreased in the same time period. The study will be published this summer in the Southern Economic Journal. For more information, go to <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D8P2COLG0.htm> Source: The Associated Press, May 11, 2007



Government, Automakers Pin Hopes on Active Safety Systems That Prevent Crashes

The focus in automotive safety is moving away from “passive” restraints and toward “active” systems that avoid crashes by keeping drivers in their lanes and adjusting speed automatically based on the car ahead. Though the features are unproven and no one knows for sure how drivers will respond, government and industry experts are hopeful the systems will help reduce fatalities. One unintended effect could be that motorists drive more aggressively because they think the systems will protect them. Positive outcomes might outweigh any negatives: the technologies could help prevent up to 60 percent of police-reported crashes. NHTSA proposed giving extra credit in its star-rating system to vehicles with crash-avoidance features, opening the debate about which systems are best. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2007-05-24-active-safety-features_N.htm

Source: USA Today, May 24, 2007

Americans Averaging Fewer Miles on the Road for the First Time in Years

High gas prices, congestion and changes in demographics are causing American motorists to drive fewer miles for the first time in 26 years, according to a USA Today analysis. Growth in miles driven has tapered off even though there are more drivers on the road; numbers indicate there's a decrease in miles per person. Reasons for the slowdown include drivers combining errands in one trip to save on gas; more people using public transportation; slow growth for minorities, women and older drivers; and people moving into downtown areas where they don't need to drive as much. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-05-17-gas-prices_N.htm

Source: USA Today, May 17, 2007

Women Becoming Riskier Drivers

Watch out, men: Women are catching up when it comes to risky driving behaviors, according to a new study in the Academic Emergency Medicine journal. Researchers studied 139,000 crashes in all age groups over a 10-year period and found that young female drivers showed a similar increase in alcohol-involved fatal crashes to that of young men. Drunk driving, cell phone use and distracted teenagers contributed to the negative trend. “Young females should not be overlooked or underestimated in risky driving habits and involvement in alcohol-related crashes,” said the lead researcher of the study.

States with Primary Seat Belt Laws Have Higher Use Rates, Reduced Fatalities

Primary seat belt enforcement laws increase belt use rate and decrease fatalities, according to researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The researchers observed seat belt use in 47 states and the District of Columbia for 13 years and found that states with secondary laws could increase their use rates 10 percent by adopting a primary law. All states' rates increased during the study, but those with primary enforcement had the highest use. The researchers also linked primary enforcement to a reduction in fatalities in another study. For more information, go to http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2007/05/seat_belt_study.html

Source: Consumer Affairs, May 7, 2007

Gov. Corzine Tapes Public Service Announcement about Life-saving Seat Belts

New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine turned a near-death experience into a learning opportunity when he appeared in a seat belt public service announcement released during the national Click It or Ticket campaign. In the PSA, Gov. Corzine details the injuries he suffered when he wasn't wearing a seat belt in a crash on April 12. He worked with NHTSA on the message, in which he says, “It took a remarkable team of doctors and a series of miracles to save my life when all I needed was a seat belt,” and urges others to buckle up. For more information and to watch the PSA, go to <http://www.wcbs880.com/pages/497256.php?contentType=4&contentId=535762>

Source: The Associated Press, May 24, 2007



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Magazine Announces Top Technology Cars in 2nd Annual Contest

PC Magazine picked its 2007 Digital Drive Award winners based on technology and safety features and then looked at technology that will be commonplace in the next two to five years. The cars with the most tech gadgets featured Bluetooth, iPod connectors and navigation as a given. Some vehicles even had a diesel engine, lane-departure warning and eight-speed automatic transmission. The award winners are pricey, but the features that make them so noteworthy could be mainstream in the next few years. To check out the top 10, go to <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,2123941,00.asp>

Source: PC Magazine, May 2, 2007

Road Rage is Worst in Miami for the Second Year

Miami drivers have the worst road rage, according to a survey released this May by AutoVantage. The city tops the list for the second year in a row; other cities near the top include New York, Boston, Los Angeles and Washington D.C. Drivers in Portland, Ore., Pittsburgh, Seattle-Tacoma, St. Louis and Dallas-Fort Worth are on the courteous side of the scale. Impatient motorists were cited as the No. 1 cause of road rage. Other causes are driving while stressed or frustrated and poor driving in the fast lane. For a PDF of the entire report, go to

http://affiniongroupmedia.com/index.php/affinion/display_blog/road_rage_survey_reveals_best_worst_cities1/ Source: The Associated Press, May 15, 2007

Universities Join Together for Automotive Research

Seven Southern universities formed an automotive research alliance to be a resource for a region rich with automotive manufacturing plants and suppliers. The National Transportation Research Center Inc., Oak Ridge National Laboratory and Tennessee Valley Authority organized the alliance, which hopes to link researchers, industry and funding organizations. Some of the participating universities—Alabama, Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn, Clemson, Kentucky, Mississippi State and Tennessee—plan to open new centers focused on automotive manufacturing and supply-chain issues. For more information, go to

<http://www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070517/BUSINESS/705170320/1003> Source: The Associated Press, May 17, 2007

Drivers about 50-50 When It Comes to Crash-Avoidance Systems

Drivers fall into two camps when it comes to crash-avoidance technologies: those who want to be in control, and those who embrace any extra help they can get. The 1,800 respondents in an informal survey for USA Today were evenly divided when asked whether they'd be likely to purchase a car with these systems. Many said they would try the vehicles after prices come down and all the kinks are worked out. To please consumers, some automakers allow drivers to shut off the systems but think motorists will get used to them over time. For more information, go to

http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2007-05-24-drivers-safety-features_N.htm

Source: USA Today, May 24, 2007

In-Car GPS Service Monitors Traffic, Alerts Drivers to Congestion

Not only is summertime a dangerous time to travel, but the holiday periods are also more congested. Americans spent 3.7 billion hours in traffic in 2003, but according to a recent survey by TeleNav, 72 percent of drivers don't check for traffic updates before getting behind the wheel. About the same number wish they had a way to find an alternate route when they've been stuck on clogged roads. To bring customers a real-time solution, TeleNav launched its TeleNav Traffic™ service, which monitors traffic along a specified route and alerts the driver to upcoming tie-ups. To learn more about TeleNav GPS Navigator and TeleNav Traffic, go to www.telenav.com



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Rhode Island Researchers Use Simulation to Test Highway Messages

The findings of a driving simulation test in Rhode Island will help the state's Department of Transportation (RIDOT) determine what types of electronic messages will best communicate information about crashes, construction and congestion to motorists. The project, conducted in partnership with the University of Rhode Island, consisted of two tests: one where participants sat at a computer and chose messages they preferred, and another where they were asked to make preferences when behind the wheel in a simulation. Researchers asked for their opinions on text vs. display, different colors and types of messages. For more information, go to <http://www.uri.edu/news/releases/?id=4030>

Cell Phones Could Disable Keys of Certain Nissan Models

Drivers of the 2007 Nissan Altima and Infiniti G35 should keep their keys at least an inch away from their cell phones. Cell phones can disable the I-Keys by erasing the electronic code, locking drivers out of their cars or making them unable to start. The problem affected a very small percentage of the vehicle models sold, and a new version of the keys will be available this fall.

Source: Automotive Fleet eNews, May 29, 2007

Gas Stations Get More Entertaining

Televisions are starting to pop up at gas stations across the country. Companies such as Fuelcast Network, PumpTop TV and Gas Station TV are working out deals with networks to provide programming at the pumps. The mini-broadcasts feature news, weather, traffic reports, trivia and advertisements. "Sensors on the roadways keep our network apprised of traffic conditions, so the consumers know exactly where accidents or slow traffic are," a PumpTop TV executive said. For more information, go to http://www.dailybulletin.com/news/ci_5998802

Source: Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, May 27, 2007

Truckers Compete for Space at Rest Stops

The number of truck stops across the country is not meeting the demand of the many truckers on the roads. Because some states have few spaces where truckers can park for the night, big rig drivers risk paying parking fines by lining highway shoulders or find a place off the beaten path, like local Wal-Marts. Because land near highways is expensive and many communities are opposed to the idea, building new parking spots is not an easy fix. However, for the first time Congress has authorized \$24 million through 2009 for state and local governments to build more truck parking.

Source: The Wall Street Journal

Driver Inattention

Fatigued Driving is Like Drunk Driving

Experts at a symposium sponsored by Canada's Highway Safety Roundtable warned attendees that fatigued drivers can be just as impaired as drunk drivers. They said drivers who have been awake for 17 hours are like those who have .05 percent blood-alcohol content (BAC), and being up for 24 hours is like .10 BAC. Whereas drunk driving can be detected with a breathalyzer test, fatigued driving is much more difficult to prove. Source: Automotive Fleet, May 17, 2007

Fatigued Drivers Should Chew Gum Instead of Drink Coffee to Stay Awake

Although getting enough sleep is always the best way to combat drowsy driving, some experts say it's better to chew caffeine gum than to gulp down a cup of coffee to stay awake. According to ARNEWS, the Army News Service, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research tested Stay Alert chewing gum, which has as much caffeine as a six-ounce cup of coffee. The gum works more quickly because it's



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absorbed through the mouth, not the stomach, a researcher said. Driver fatigue causes 100,000 crashes a year, resulting in 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in losses, according to NHTSA.

Drivers with Sleep Apnea More Likely to Have Injury Crashes

Obstructive sleep apnea patients are twice as likely as people without the condition to be in a car crash and are three to five times as likely to have a serious crash resulting in injury. In the first study to look at the severity of such crashes, the sleep apnea group was involved in 250 crashes over three years, while the group without sleep apnea had 123 crashes. In the general population men crash more than women, but men and women with sleep apnea crash at a similar rate. For more information, go to <http://www.thoracic.org/sections/publications/press-releases/conference/articles/2007/press-releases/sleep-apnea-patients-have-greatly-increased-risk-of-severe-car-crashes.html>

News from the USDOT

U.S. Traffic Deaths, Injuries Down from Last Year

Traffic fatalities decreased slightly in 2006 nationwide, according to preliminary figures from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Over half of the vehicle occupants killed, 43,300 in 2006 compared to 43,443 in 2005, were unbuckled. "Bad things happen when people don't buckle up, and no one is immune from the damage and devastation that comes from not wearing a seat belt," U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters said. The fatality rate fell to 1.44 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from 1.45 in 2005. Injuries dropped 6 percent, but alcohol-related fatalities increased 2.4 percent. The final report will be complete later this summer. For more information, the preliminary report is available at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810755.PDF>

President Bush Didn't Click It When Driving on His Ranch

President Bush was taped driving without a seat belt on his Texas ranch a day after NHTSA launched the Click It or Ticket campaign. While seat belts are not required by law on private property in Texas, the president sets a standard for behavior, and his actions are copied widely. President Bush praised seat belt use in a 2002 health and fitness report that estimated seat belts save about 10,000 lives a year. Source: Consumeraffairs.com, May 23, 2007

Truck Crashes Costly, Study Finds

A single truck crash in the United States costs about \$100,000 on average, according to a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration study. The lowest costs were \$56,000 for straight truck crashes with no trailers; the highest and rarest were trucks with two to three trailers, costing \$290,000 each. Emergency services, medical, property damage, lost productivity, pain and "quality of life" losses were factored into the costs. The costliest incident is a fatal crash, averaging \$3.6 million each. The average cost for a non-fatal injury crash was \$195,000, and a property-damage only crash was \$15,000. For more information, go to <http://www.todaystrucking.com/news.cfm?intDocID=17957>
Source: Today's Trucking, May 24, 2007

Work-Home

Bill Aims to Prevent SUV and Truck Backovers by Expanding Technology

Congress is considering a new bill that would upgrade rear visibility in new vehicles to help reduce SUV and truck backovers of children. The bill sponsors want more mirrors, sensors and cameras to reduce blind spots. The legislation also includes language on improving power windows and brake



interlock systems. About four children a week die from backover crashes, power-window strangulation or being trapped in hot cars.

Ford Posts Videos on Web to Teach Teens Safe Driving

More than 7,000 teens are killed on American roads a year, making crashes the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds. To reach teens where they spend their time, Ford offers safe driving videos on popular Web sites such as www.youtube.com, www.yahoo.com and on Ford's own www.drivingskillsforlife.com. New tips will be posted through the end of June, coinciding with the start of summer vacation and the deadly driving season. The videos show teens how to respond to certain scenarios and how to improve hazard recognition, vehicle handling and space and speed management. Ford also provides free educational materials and conducting hands-on driving events in several locations. For more information, go to

http://media.ford.com/newsroom/release_display.cfm?release=26054

Parents Worry about Teens' Driving on Prom Night

When it comes to prom night, parents are worried about their teens' safety on the road more than sexual activity or alcohol and drug use. In the study for DaimlerChrysler, almost two-thirds of parents reported being most concerned about driving-related activities such as drunk driving, crashes and reckless driving. Their fears may be founded, because car crashes are the top killer of teens. Parents can help prevent such tragedies by encouraging alternative transportation, reminding their kids to buckle up, limiting passengers and insisting on no drugs or alcohol. Chrysler Group's Road Ready Teens program and new online video game StreetWise Version 2.0 can help parents and teens make prom night a safe one. For more information, go to

<http://cgcomm.daimlerchrysler.com/documents.do?method=display&docType=pressrelease&docId=6858>

Communities Remind Parents of Underage Drinking Laws

Parents are becoming the new audience of underage drinking prevention campaigns. Illinois communities are cracking down on underage drinking during prom and graduation season by reminding parents that hosting parties where teens are allowed to drink is illegal and by tightening those laws. A new state bill could make it a felony when someone is injured as a result of permissible teen drinking. "What we're experiencing is a breakdown of parental control in certain families and an increase in underage drinking in homes of parents who don't care," one parent said. Tips for parents include networking with other parents, keeping parties small, serving non-alcoholic drinks and plenty of food and talking with their children about a no-alcohol policy. Source: Chicago Tribune, May 15, 2007

Marine Corps to Permit Teenage Members to Drink Alcohol

A new Marine Corps policy will allow service members ages 18 and older to drink during special events at Marine facilities. Marines will also be able to drink overseas where the drinking age is lower than 21. Opponents are concerned that young drinkers could hurt themselves or others when off the base. "We would hate to see a mother or father lose their child here on American soil in an alcohol-related crash or injure somebody else when impaired," said the executive director of San Diego's Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Source: JoinTogether, May 21, 2007

Students Who Binge Drink Also More Likely to Drink and Drive

High school students who report binge drinking 10 or more days in the past month were six times more likely to drive drunk than those who did not binge drink. The National Youth Risk Behavior Study (YRBS) found that 45 percent of high school students in the U.S. reported drinking in the past month, and almost two-thirds of those were binge drinkers. The Surgeon General recently released a report



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on underage drinking that includes suggestions for solving the underage drinking problem. For more information, go to www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/cesarfax/vol16/16-20.pdf Source: CESAR FAX, May 21, 2007

Action Guides Empower Community Groups to Combat Teen Alcohol Use

Based on The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking, new guides are available that teach families, communities and educators how to take action. The guides show each group what they can do to reduce underage drinking and prevent the problems it causes. For more information and to download the guides, visit <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>

International Traffic Safety News

In-car Technology Could Help Relieve Congestion, Save Time

A test in Scotland shows technology can help commuters save about an hour per week of drive time by alerting motorists to congested routes and suggesting alternatives. The report recommends that Scotland create a national database of all major and back roads. "We can use today's technology to avoid congestion and take the best routes, not just the obvious ones, to avoid congestion, save time and also reduce our overall environmental impact," a section of the report reads. For more information, go to http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/6654977.stm Source: BBC News, May 14, 2007

Hands-Free Conversations More Dangerous Than Face-to-Face

Speaking to someone on a hands-free phone requires more mental effort than having a conversation in person, making hands-free phones more dangerous than chatting with passengers in cars. United Kingdom researchers found that motorists with hands-free sets drove faster and weren't as able to follow cars safely. The Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) noted that work conversations on hands-free phones could be hampered because the quality of information and decision-making also dropped. TRL recommended hands-free phones be included in any future legislation about banning mobile phones. Source: FleetNewsNet, May 10, 2007

European Campaign Calls for Electronic Stability Control

Fleets should pressure auto manufacturers to make Electronic Stability Control (ESC) standard on all new cars, European crash test experts said as part of the "Choose ESC" campaign. "We would, wherever possible, encourage companies to have ESC as a mandatory feature within their car fleet policies, particularly as more manufacturers are offering the technology either as standard or an option," ALD Automotive's marketing director said. If all new vehicles were equipped with the feature, 400 fatalities and 3,000 injuries could be prevented on UK roads. Source: FleetNewsNet, May 10, 2007

Monitoring Devices Allow Companies to Track Driver Location

United Kingdom companies are fitting their vehicles and drivers with electronic tagging devices that allow real-time monitoring of location and activities. The telematics keep accurate records of distances, times and speeds, which can be valuable in litigation but might compromise privacy. A Grant Thornton trucking survey found that 50 percent of fleets are already using telematics, and that number is expected to rise by 32 percent this year. "Perhaps more so than any other innovation in recent years, the advent of telematics could drastically change the fleet world," said the marketing head for Leaseplan UK. "The sheer range of tools and applications coming to the market means that there's a real sense that anything is possible." Source: Financial Times, May 9, 2007



Fleet Managers in Spain and Sweden Look for Price and Reliability, Not Safety, in New Cars

The findings of a study of fleet managers from Spain and Sweden suggest that vehicle safety is not their top priority when purchasing a vehicle. Price, dependability, running costs, size and fuel consumption are more likely to trump safety in the new vehicle purchase or lease process. Both countries placed about the same amount of importance on vehicle safety. The researchers concluded that fleet managers need to be educated about the role of vehicle safety in a new purchase and that crash test results need to be reported more widely.