



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers November 6, 2008

Special Recognition

Jay Minotas, Manager, General Motors Safe Driving Program

Members of the Michigan NETS Advisory Board extend their heartfelt thanks to Jay Minotas of GM for his dedicated support of NETS and for his many contributions to our state and nation in making our roads safer. Jay announced his retirement from GM effective November 1, 2008. We expect that Jay will continue his passion for traffic safety well into his retirement. Well wishes can be extended to Jay by e-mail: jtminotas@aol.com

SHARE THE ROAD

Anti-lock Brakes Make Biking Safer

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that the fatal crash rate involving motorcycles with anti-lock braking systems (ABS) is 38 percent less than similar motorcycles without ABS. The brakes help motorcycle riders stop their bikes abruptly without locking the wheels or fishtailing. The system allows riders to fully brake both wheels in an emergency and avoid hitting the pavement. They're more common on touring bikes and typically add \$1,000 to the cost of a motorcycle. The president and CEO of the American Motorcyclist Association said the IIHS' report underscores the need for a federal study on the causes of motorcycle crashes. Insurance losses were 21 percent lower for bikes with ABS. For more information, go to http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5h_w5pPDghej-eN44GqiVX4G795rgD93VAJ280

Source: Associated Press, October 22, 2008

Several Strategies Could Entice Fleets to Adopt Safety Technology

Despite the benefits of safety technology, attitudes in the industry need to change before they're widely accepted, fleet executives said at the American Trucking Associations' Management Conference & Exhibition in New Orleans. J.B. Hunt Transport Services Inc. spends at least \$50 million a year on safety technology and training. The number of crashes the carrier experienced fell by 43 percent over the past decade, and the injury rate also has fallen. While some companies voluntarily spend that kind of money, others may need to be forced into using electronic onboard recorders, lane departure warning and collision avoidance systems. Regulatory and financial incentives could entice the industry to embrace some of the technologies. Graduated safety ratings or reductions in minimum insurance requirements could help. Trucking fleets can promote wider adoption of technology among themselves; once larger fleets buy the technology, smaller ones will follow suit. For more information, go to <http://www.ttnews.com/articles/basetemplate.aspx?storyid=20723>

Source: Transport Topics, October 20, 2008

Larger Labels Could Prevent Counterfeit DOT-certified Helmets

Federal officials are proposing tough new rules regarding the Department of Transportation labels for motorcycle helmets. Fake DOT stickers can be used to counterfeit safety certification of novelty motorcycle helmets that don't protect riders' heads in a crash. Wearing a certified helmet cuts the risk of dying in a crash by 37 percent. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters supports a new, larger label that would be applied to the helmet under its clear coating. It would be more difficult to affix fake DOT stickers to helmets that don't meet standards. The rule would also refine the tests manufacturers do to certify their helmets. It would cost manufacturers about 2 cents per helmet, or about \$100,000, to comply. Motorcycle groups say the time and money would be better spent on rider education and training. For more information, go to http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601039&refer=columnist_skrzycki&sid=aJheDJZYQe.g

Source: Bloomberg News, October 14, 2008



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Motorcycles and Cars Can Communicate with Each Other Using New Honda System

Honda's new "Vehicle-to-Vehicle Communication" system could reduce road deaths of both motorcyclists and drivers. The system uses wireless LAN technology to link vehicles within a radio range and establish an ad-hoc network. It continuously monitors the position, speed, distance and direction of other road users and can send information to vehicles further afield. The system works even in conditions of darkness and poor visibility. The data is centralized and then sent to drivers and motorcyclists, who can view the information on a display. For more information, go to

<http://www.traffictechnologytoday.com/news.php?NewsID=8766> Source: Traffic Technology International, October 26, 2008

Bike Dots Reduce Wait Time for Cyclists

Bicycle detector pavement markings—more commonly referred to as "bike dots"—are found at about a fifth of Toronto's intersections, but many bicyclists don't know they exist or how to use them. The three white dots, about the size of dinner plates, mark traffic sensors sensitive enough to detect cyclists stopped at a red light. They keep cyclists from waiting forever for the right-of-way or dismounting to press the pedestrian crossing button. The city plans to paint a new symbol, most likely a bike, near the dots starting next year. For more information, go to

<http://www.thestar.com/News/GTA/article/525643> Source: Toronto Star, October 28, 2008

Latest Traffic Safety News

Time Change Adjustment Leads to Crashes

The period following the return to standard time on Nov. 2 can be a particularly dangerous time for employees, both at work and on their way home. Pedestrians walking around dusk are nearly three times more likely to be struck and killed by cars in the days following the end of daylight savings time than just before the time change, according to researchers at Carnegie Mellon University. Ending daylight savings time results in about 37 more U.S. pedestrian deaths around 6 p.m. in November compared with October. The lack of adjustment to earlier nighttime is the problem, not darkness itself. The time change has been known to leave many of us feeling fatigued, which can pose some safety risks at home and at the office. It takes people who work traditional hours several days to readjust their sleep schedule after the time change.

Source: Safety Daily Advisor, October 29, 2008

Driving Takes More Brain Power than Most Realize

Multitasking behind the wheel becomes dangerous because driving requires a surprising amount of brain power. Drivers have to process huge amounts of visual information, predict the actions of other drivers and coordinate precise movements of their hands and feet. "If you're driving while cell-phoning, then your performance is going to be as poor as if you were legally drunk," said a University of Michigan psychology professor. Talking on the phone, even with a hands-free device, distracts drivers to the point where they focus less on the road. As an experiment, a professional pianist was asked to play familiar and unfamiliar pieces while answering questions. He took longer to answer while playing the pieces that were new to him. Neuroscientists have found the brain struggles with paying attention to sights and sounds simultaneously. Driver inattention is involved in about 80 percent of crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. For more information, go to <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95702512&ft=1&f=1003>

Source: NPR story and audio report, October 23, 2008

The Extinction of the Passing Lane

A Washington Post columnist recently asked, "What is the international signal for passing on the highway?" There isn't one anymore, John Kelly mused, because it's everyone for his or herself. The notion that the left lane is for passing is obsolete, and most people drive how they like no matter what lane they're in. "Part of the problem is we've gotten so much volume that you need all the lanes to carry capacity," said Ken Kobetsky of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. "Slower Traffic Keep Right" signs are a thing of the past. So are flashing lights behind someone you want to pass and delivering the "friendly wave" after someone lets you into their lane. For more information, go to

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/13/AR2008101302363.html>

Source: The Washington Post, October 14, 2008



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Fewer Miles Traveled Still Doesn't Relieve Congestion in Chicago

Even though more people may be working at home because of gas prices, gridlock is still a problem in Chicago. Motorists are making fewer trips to the pumps, but the highways are still severely congested and worse now than a year ago. A new study by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning also found that drivers need to budget almost double the amount of travel time that trips should take. The number of miles driven during the busiest travel hours has fallen steeply, down 4.6 percent from last year. Roadways were so jammed with traffic before the recent increase in fuel prices that the decline in miles traveled hasn't made a dent in the congestion problem. Major construction projects have canceled out any gains. The study suggests Chicagoans travel during non-peak hours to relieve congestion. For more information, go to <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/transportation/chi-getting-around-13-oct13,0,5852597.colum>

Source: Chicago Tribune, October 13, 2008

Ithaca Investigates Podcar Implementation

Connect Ithaca is hoping to make the New York town the first podcar community in the United States. Podcars are driverless, computer-guided vehicles that transport people where they want to go on demand. "It creates the perfect blend between the privacy and autonomy of the automobile with the public transportation aspect and, of course, it uses clean energy," Connect Ithaca's president said. The lightweight vehicles ride on their own network separate from other traffic. Podcars carry two to 10 passengers, reduce congestion and free up space now used for parking. A rider would enter a destination on a computerized pad, and a car would take the person nonstop to the location. A limited version with larger cars was built in 1975 and still transports West Virginia University students. Heathrow Airport will launch a podcar pilot project next year. A city system would cost millions of dollars, with funding coming from both the private and public sectors. For more information, go to <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5g7iQhgg9iTLAW8WEduK-c71ReK5wD93P54A00>

Source: Associated Press, October 13, 2008

Safety Board Names 'Most Wanted' Improvements

The National Transportation Safety Board recently issued its 2009 Federal Most Wanted List of safety improvements. New to the list are restricting cell phone use by motorcoach drivers and requiring electronic on-board recorders by all motor carriers. Research shows using a cell phone while driving degrades performance, resulting in slower reaction times and driving speeds and increased inattention. The Safety Board has advocated the use of electronic on-board recorders for more than 30 years to increase hours-of-service compliance. The Board added the issue to this year's list because it views FMCSA's proposal as inadequate. Source: NTSB news release, October 28, 2008

Advancing Technologies

Pilot Projects, Conference Build Momentum for Intelligent Transportation

Automakers, government agencies, safety advocates, engineers and suppliers will meet in New York from Nov. 17-20 for the 2008 Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) World Congress conference. The concept of "intelligent highways" has been around for a while, but the technology is advancing to the point where ITS has new momentum behind it. A pilot program in the San Francisco Bay area uses data from phones equipped with GPS to keep tabs on traffic congestion. Technology is also being developed to warn drivers of "rapid braking" before it occurs. "Someday these technologies will be as commonplace as seatbelts and airbags are today," said a U.S. Department of Transportation official. For more information, go to <http://industry.bnet.com/auto/1000315/behind-the-scenes-auto-industry-works-to-cut-accidents/>

Source: BNET, October 27, 2008

News from USDOT

New Rules Try to Make School Buses Even Safer

New federal rules require higher seat backs, lap and shoulder belts for small school buses and safety standards for seat belts on large school buses. All new buses in the United States must be equipped with 24-inch-high seat backs instead of



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the 20-inch-high seat backs required today. Higher seat backs help prevent taller and heavier children from being thrown over the seat in a crash. All new school buses weighing less than five tons must have three-point seat belts, because they don't absorb shock as well as larger buses. New standards for seat belts on large school buses will help lower installation costs. The federal government also will start allowing school districts to use federal highway safety funds to pay for the cost of installing belts. For more information, go to

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/Rulemaking/Rules/Associated%20Files/SchoolBusBeltsFinal.pdf>

Source: US DOT news release, October 15, 2008

Web Site Helps Transportation Planners Prevent Road Departure

The U.S. Federal Highway Administration created a web site to help guide highway designers, decision makers and practitioners on how to reduce roadway departure crashes. In 2007, more than 24,000 people died when their vehicle left its lane and crashed. To keep drivers on the road, they must get information about how to safely control their vehicles. Countermeasures such as retroreflective signs and pavement markings can help keep drivers in the proper lane. Rumble strips can alert drivers who are starting to drift. Wide shoulders, breakaway sign and light supports, roadside barriers, bridge railings and median barriers can also help prevent crashes or serious injury. For more information, go to http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadway_dept/

International Traffic Safety News

International Conference on Traffic Safety at Work Planned for February

The first international conference for business, labor, policy makers and the research community to discuss strategies to prevent traffic crashes will take place Feb. 16-18 in Washington, D.C. Participants will offer delegates an opportunity to exchange ideas and forge partnerships at the International Conference on Road Safety at Work. The U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is organizing the conference. Co-sponsors include the World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization, International Labour Organization, U.S. Department of State and the National Safety Council. Breakout sessions will cover legal issues in fleet management, technology to monitor driver performance, "eco-driving" and implementing a global driver safety culture, among other topics. Registration information is available at <http://www.nsc.org/forms/divisions/NIOSH.aspx>

Cameras Allow Fleet Managers to Inspect Vehicles from Afar

Fleet Support Group's nationwide network of Masterserve garages are equipped with Masterview, a remote video inspection system that lets fleet managers see vehicles' and components' conditions from anywhere in Britain. They can view live pictures via a broadband link. When vehicle abuse is detected, fleet managers are informed and shown the evidence. Examples of driver abuse include interior and bodywork damage, illegal tires and badly worn brake pads and discs. Source: Driving for Better Business, October 21, 2008

Traffic Cameras that 'Hear' Crashes Have Other Uses

A traffic camera in Louisville, Ky. can automatically start recording when it detects the sound of cars crashing or tires screeching. A London researcher hopes this technology can help the health, security and creative industries by isolating sounds from interfering background noise. Besides the traffic implications, sound isolation could help create film databases or pick out specific parts of music. For more information, go to <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/transport/3246349/Traffic-cameras-that-can-hear-accidents-part-of-new-listening-technology.html> Source: Telegraph, October 23, 2008

Gray Fleets Cost More in Long Run, Report Finds

Gray fleets could be wasting millions every year and increasing accident risks, according to a report from the Office of Government Commerce. Public sector employees travel about 1.4 billion miles a year on business in gray fleet vehicles, accounting for 57 percent of public sector mileage. The average age of a gray fleet car is 6.7 years, which would have emissions 27 percent higher than a new vehicle. In some cases, using gray fleet vehicles costs more than using rental



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vehicles or public transportation. They also raise the risk of crashes and create more pollution if they're not properly managed. Ten government departments contributed to the report, "The Gray Fleet Best Practice Guide." For more information, go to http://www.fleetnews.co.uk/files/Grey_Fleet_Best_Practice.pdf Source: FleetNews, October 14, 2008

Insurer Says Claims Rise after Time Change

British drivers are more likely to crash the week following the change from British Summer Time, according to insurance company Direct Line. Last year, Direct Line received 15 percent more claims after the clocks went back an hour compared to the week before. "Darker conditions result in slower reaction times, greater braking distances and poor depth perception," said Direct Line's head of car insurance. Source: FleetNews, October 28, 2008

UK Government Maintains Blood Alcohol Content Limit

The United Kingdom decided not to reduce its drunken driving limit from 80 to 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood, despite evidence it would save 65 lives a year. In mainland Europe, the limit is either 50 or 20 mg. Ireland is reducing its 80 mg limit to 50 mg next year. "We are not convinced that dropping to 50 mg is the right answer," Road Safety Minister Jim Fitzpatrick said. "Drivers who are between 50 and 80 mg are not the ones we are most worried about. It's the ones above 100 mg." Instead of a lower limit, the UK will focus on better enforcement of the existing one. Officers might be able to stop and test drivers at random, and the courts may be allowed to order repeat offenders to install "alcolocks" in their vehicles. Source: RoadSafe News, October 2008

Work-Home

Software Holds Incoming Calls When Driver on Road

Canadian software company Aegis Mobility has developed DriveAssistT, software that will detect whether a cell phone is moving at car speeds. When that happens, the software will alert the cellular network and hold calls and text messages until the trip is over. Callers will hear a message saying the person they're trying to reach appears to be driving and can hit a button to leave an emergency voice mail. David Teater, a vice president at Aegis, became part of the company after his 12-year-old son was killed by a driver who was talking on a cell phone. "We've been conditioned our entire lives to answer ringing phones," he said. The technology will work on phones with Windows Mobile and Symbian software. The software has to be supported by a cellular provider, but Aegis has no deals in place yet. The service will probably cost \$10 to \$20 per month per family. Nationwide Mutual Insurance plans to offer a 3-10 percent discount on family policies for people who use DriveAssistT. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/tech/products/2008-10-13-cellphone-driving_N.htm Source: USA Today, October 13, 2008

Safety Board Recognizes National Teen Driver Safety Week

Mark V. Rosenker, acting chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, emphasized the importance of protecting youth during National Teen Driver Safety Week (October 19-25). The week-long effort brought teens, community leaders, educators and parents together to help prevent teen crashes and injuries. Congress established the week last year to focus attention on teen crashes and to find solutions to lower teen drivers' fatal crash risk. This year's theme was "Passengers," because for teen drivers, multiple passengers often results in a deadly combination of inattention, inexperience and immaturity. The Safety Board recently added a ban on the use of electronic communications devices while driving to its model GDL program. Source: NTSB news release, October 21, 2008

Teen Deaths Dropping Faster than National Rate in Texas

Over a five year period, the number of teen drivers involved in fatal crashes declined in Texas nearly twice as fast as the rest of the country. Texas saw a 27 percent decline in fatal crashes involving teen drivers from 2002 to 2006, according to the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI). The drop nationwide during the same time period was 13 percent. Texas instituted graduated drivers licenses in 2002. In 2003, TTI launched a program that encourages student groups to develop projects about risky driving behavior, reaching teen through peer networks. For more information, go to <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/6069353.html> Source: Associated Press, October 20, 2008



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GDL Laws, Other Restrictions Reduce Crash Rates for Teens

Teen driving deaths are decreasing, in part because many states require a minimum number of supervised practice hours behind the wheel before teens receive their licenses. The number of young drivers and their passengers killed in crashes is down almost 20 percent in the last five years, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Many states have adopted graduated licensing systems, where teens earn their driving rights in stages. States that have GDL laws have cut teen crashes by 23 percent since 1996. In almost every state, new teen drivers are banned from driving late at night and having too many friends ride along in the car. NHTSA has shown limiting teens' night driving can cut crashes by 60 percent. For more information, go to <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=6075050&page=1>

Source: ABC World News with Charles Gibson, October 20, 2008

Cameras Capture Teens' Risky Driving Behaviors

More than 100 families in Southern Maryland have enrolled in a state-sponsored study to fit their cars with cameras that record the moments right before and after an unusual driving maneuver. State officials say the cameras could reduce fatal teen crashes. Last year, crashes involving drivers ages 16 to 20 killed 112 people in Maryland; most were due to driver inexperience. The camera is mounted on the front windshield and captures video of what's happening inside and outside the vehicle. It saves about 20 seconds of footage when excessive G-forces trigger the system. DriveCam experts review the video, add tips for the young drivers and post footage to a Web site where parents and teens can watch. The cameras typically cost \$900 for hardware, installation and a year of service. After the first year, the system costs \$30 a month. The study is supported by a \$170,000 grant from the state's highway safety office. For more information, go to

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/23/AR2008102303821.html>

Source: Washington Post, October 24, 2008