



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers October 16, 2008

Latest Traffic Safety News

Bike Programs Face Multiple Roadblocks

Cities trying to implement bike-sharing programs are facing legal and funding hurdles. Early programs worked on the honor system, but the bikes got stolen. The Paris program could be a model—20,000 bikes are available for people who have previously registered with a credit card. Washington, D.C.'s new self-service rental program has more than 900 users, but the replacement costs of \$550 if a bike is lost or stolen could drive some people away. Chicago is trying to implement a bike-sharing program, but costs are prohibitive, and the city needs some funding from the private sector. Boston's program has been slow going because lawyers are trying to sort out who is liable if a rider gets injured on a rented bike. "Anti-bike activists" sued San Francisco when the city planned to build 40 miles of bike lanes, so that project has been on hold since 2006. For more information, go to

http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-10-01-bikeprograms_N.htm Source: USA Today, October 1, 2008

Insurer Tests Whether Video Exercises Help Older Drivers

Home and auto insurer Allstate Corp. soon will start testing a program where 100,000 50- to 75-year-olds will try computer-based video exercises to improve the way their brains process visual information. Allstate expects that Posit Science Corp.'s "brain fitness" software will help reduce risky driving maneuvers by up to 40 percent and improve stopping distance. In the Pennsylvania test, which runs through March, drivers will complete five exercises. Researchers will determine whether crash rates become lower in this group compared to those who don't use the software. The insurer might offer discounts to those who participate. Source: Chicago Tribune, October 1, 2008

Bicycle Commuters Get Break under Bailout Package

The \$700 billion bailout plan benefits some taxpayers directly—those who commute by bike. Employees who ride bicycles to work as their primary mode of transportation will be eligible for a \$20-a-month tax-free reimbursement starting in January. Employers will reimburse workers and then deduct the expense from their federal taxes. The money can be used to purchase, store, maintain or repair bikes. Federal tax rolls could lose about \$1 million because of the new write-off. Members of the Oregon delegation championed the bicycle benefit. For more information, go to

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/10/09/BA1D13DRO7.DTL>

Source: San Francisco Chronicle, October 9, 2008

Physics Concepts Help Explain How Fastest Route for One Doesn't Benefit All

Researchers from the Santa Fe Institute and the University of New Mexico have found that the fastest route an individual can take is not always best for the common good. Their study looks into the "price of anarchy" (POA), or how much time is lost because of people who choose the route that's fastest for them rather than what's best for everyone overall. In Boston, individuals waste up to 30 percent of their travel time because they choose a route that's personally, not socially, optimum. The counterintuitive concept that closing certain roads can sometimes increase efficiency and allow drivers to travel faster is known as Braess' paradox. "Opening a new road without careful consideration can worsen the system contrary to the original intention," one of the researchers said. For more information, go to

<http://www.physorg.com/news142157939.html> Source: Physorg, October 2, 2008

Researchers Warn Drivers to Get to Polls Carefully

Most drivers know to be on the lookout for other motorists on New Year's Eve and during summer holidays, but now researchers warn them of one other time to be extra vigilant: Election Day. A new study finds that on average, 24 more people died in car crashes during voting hours on election days than on other Tuesdays in October and



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





November. The findings show an 18 percent increase in risk of death, which was pretty consistent over the last eight presidential Election Days. Some of the reasons for the increase include rushing to get to polling places, driving unfamiliar routes and being distracted thinking of the candidates. Voters can reduce their risks by wearing seat belts, driving the speed limit and avoiding alcohol use. The University of Toronto study is based on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's fatal crash data and appears in the Journal of the American Medical Association.
Source: Associated Press, September 30, 2008

Colorado Installs Underground Sensor to Detect Animals Near Road

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) just installed the first-in-the-nation Wildlife Detection System on a stretch of US 160 to warn drivers of animals' presence near the road. The system consists of a cable buried 30 feet under either side of the roadway. It's been used for security by the military, prisons and airports, but never as wildlife detection. CDOT overlaid crash data with a map of wildlife migration to determine where they'd test the system. Fencing, permanent signs and lighting were considered but weren't quite right. The detection system emits an electromagnetic field that can detect the presence of large animals and then activates electronic signs to warn drivers. Engineers also installed speed radars to help gauge drivers' reactions. The entire project costs about \$1 million and will need to undergo several years of testing before its validity can be fully realized. For more information, go to <http://www.dot.state.co.us/Communications/news/SW20080929-1.html>
Source: Colorado Department of Transportation, September 29, 2008

UPS Inducts 'Circle of Honor' Drivers

UPS has inducted 715 drivers into its "Circle of Honor," an elite group of drivers who have avoided crashes for 25 or more years. Now 4,648 total active drivers have earned this honor. Circle of Honor drivers will receive a uniform patch with their individual number years of safe drive

GAO Makes Recommendations for Dealing with Technology Behind the Wheel

The fast pace of evolving communication technology is challenging federal efforts to protect drivers against distractions, according to a report the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released. Choosing the right countermeasures for technology that distracts drivers is complicated by a lack of evidence to measure the problem. Some in-car technology has benefited highway safety efforts, the report also found. The GAO recommends that the Department of Transportation develop an approach to guide decision-making on new trends, evaluate new data systems and analytic techniques and create a schedule for communicating with Congress. To view the report, go to <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0956.pdf> Source: GAO release, October 3, 2008

Hybrids Not Tested for Use as Taxicabs

Toyota and Honda have issued warnings against using their hybrid cars as taxis, according to the Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade (MTBOT). Ford, General Motors and Nissan have not certified the crashworthiness of their hybrid taxicabs as modified with mandatory partitions. As of 2007, New York City requires all new taxis to achieve 25 miles per gallon. The MTBOT mounted a legal challenge, citing a report that shows hybrids are unfit as cabs. No federal crash tests exist for hybrid taxicabs modified with petitions. Hybrid automakers warn against any modifications in the owner manuals. Source: GAO release, October 3, 2008

Lengthening Yellow Lights Shown to Reduce Crashes in Arizona City

A yearlong experiment at one Arizona intersection showed that lengthening the traffic signal's yellow light by half a second has dramatically reduced the number of crashes in that spot. At the test intersection, engineers lengthened the yellow light from 4 seconds to 4.5 seconds in August 2007. Crashes went from 55 in the 12 months prior to the switch to 27 after the change. The city of Chandler soon will add half a second to eight or nine other intersections for two years to see if the effect is replicated. For more information, go to <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/2008/10/06/20081006yellowlight1006.html>
Source: The Arizona Republic, October 6, 2008



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





Drug-Free Work Week Coming Up

Drug-Free Work Week will take place Oct. 20-26. Organized by the Department of Labor, the purpose of the week is to inform employers, employees and the public that a drug-free workplace is crucial to occupational safety and health. In 2006, three-quarters of the 17.9 million reported drug users 18 and up were employed. For more information, go to www.dol.gov/asp/programs/drugs/workingpartners/DFWW-Introduction.asp

Study Shows Distracting Power of iPods

David Fisher, an engineer who runs the Human Performance Lab at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is about to publish two studies that show a variety of devices distract drivers. On average, almost every driver who used an iPod while driving a simulator turned their eyes away from the road for a full two seconds at least once. When drivers turn away for two seconds, they increase their crash risk by a factor of three. Drivers who use voice-activated systems were half as likely to turn away from the road for that long. The second study focuses on drivers ages 16 to 18. They're more likely to take their eyes off the road for a dangerous period of time when checking a map, dialing a cell phone or changing a CD. For more information, go to

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2008/10/05/study_points_to_hazard_of_driver_ipods/

Source: The Boston Globe, October 5, 2008

West Virginia Drivers: Beware Deer

Drivers in West Virginia are the most likely to hit a deer, according to State Farm's deer claims data for the last half of 2007 and first half of 2008. The state tops the list for the second year in a row. Michigan remains second, with Pennsylvania, Iowa and Arkansas coming in third, fourth and fifth. Hawaii is still the state where drivers are least likely to hit a deer. The average property damage cost for car-deer crashes was \$2,950, up 2.5 percent from a year ago. About 1.5 million deer-vehicle crashes happen annually in the United States, causing more than 150 fatalities and \$1.1 billion in property damage. Crashes are more frequent in the deer mating months of October, November and December. Drivers should watch for deer-crossing signs, pay special attention between 6-9 p.m. and use high-beam headlights when possible. For more information, go to

http://www.statefarm.com/about/media/media_releases/wv_deer_collisions.asp Source: State Farm, October 8, 2008

ATA Adopts Safety Recommendations at Board Meeting

American Trucking Associations' (ATA) Board of Directors voted to adopt 18 recommendations to further reduce the number of highway-related fatalities and injuries. The new safety policies are designed to improve performance of commercial and non-commercial drivers and result in safer vehicles and motor carriers. The recommendations include policies on technology use and CDL testing standards, support for additional parking facilities and a national 65 mph limit and creation of a national clearinghouse for CDL license holders' drug test results. For more information, go to

<http://www.truckline.com/Newsroom/PressReleases/Pages/ATAExpandsItsHighwayAgenda.aspx>

Source: American Trucking Association, October 7, 2008

Advancing Technologies

Automakers Invest in Telematics

Even in a tough economy, automakers are continuing to focus on telematics as a way to increase customer loyalty, generate new revenue, enhance aftermarket vehicle performance and avoid recalls. General Motors' OnStar has been around for 10 years now, but some analysts wonder if the model is sustainable. Ford's Sync uses drivers' own phones as part of the voice-activated system, and Chrysler has come out with its "uconnect," which uses Bluetooth for voice-controlled communication between mobile phones and the onboard receiver. Drivers can save money by being connected, because some systems collect diagnostic information and report it monthly. Telematics ultimately will become a standard feature, but a lack of standards across the industry is a handicap. For more information, go to

<http://www.wirelessweek.com/Article-In-Driver-Seat.aspx> Source: WirelessWeek, October 1, 2008



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





UPS Drivers Test New Motorola Computers

UPS is testing a new rugged mobile computer from Motorola in long-haul trailer trucks and large trucks that move packages between sorting facilities. The VC6096 would give UPS managers automatic access to information such as fuel economy and help drivers log departure and arrival times wirelessly. The computer wouldn't replace the proprietary handheld that more than 100,000 UPS drivers currently use. The VC6096 uses the Windows Mobile 6.1 operating system, giving UPS wide-area network and Wi-Fi connectivity. It has a QWERTY keyboard, 6.5 inch touch display, weighs 4.8 pounds and will sell for \$4,395. Telemetrics will give drivers and dispatchers information on the next route, as well as automatic information about vehicle idling or excessive speed. For more information, go to http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=9116520&intsrc=hm_list

Source: ComputerWorld, October 7, 2008

Automakers Give Drivers Connections They Crave

The number of vehicles sold in the United States with optional support for the iPod currently stands at 39 percent but is expected to jump to more than 58 percent next year. Automakers are trying to stimulate sales by offering in-demand technological features. "The automotive industry is at the point where in-vehicle technologies—or the lack of them—are influencing sales," one researcher said. For the past few years, American consumers have been asking for improved connectivity between their vehicles' audio systems and their portable music players, particularly iPods. Automakers will offer USB interfaces on a third of all vehicle models next year, about double from 2008. More will also adopt Bluetooth wireless connections and real-time traffic data. For more information, go to

<http://www.tmcnet.com/voip/ip-communications/articles/42267-ipod-support-expected-58-2009-cars.htm>

Source: TMCnet, October 8, 2008

News from USDOT

Waterways Could Help Reduce Congestion on Major Highways

To cut congestion across the nation's busiest highways, the federal government will add capacity on U.S. seas. A new national network of marine highways will help move cargo across the country. Key maritime inland and coastal maritime corridors will be eligible for up to \$25 million in existing federal capital construction funds. Communities will continue to qualify for up to \$1.7 billion in federal highway congestion mitigation and air quality funds. The initiative makes it easier for companies to use new maritime routes by helping them locate shippers that are willing to move goods by water. The interim final rule would go into effect after a 120-day public comment period. For more information, go to <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/dot14908.htm>

Source: USDOT news release, October 9, 2008

Media Required to Wear Safety Vests When Reporting from Highways

Members of the media should wear high-visibility safety vests when reporting on incidents on public highways, according to new requirements from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The regulation seeks to increase the visibility and safety of roadside workers and will go into effect Nov. 24. In an explanatory note, FHWA includes media in the category of "responders to incidents," who are required to wear compliant, high-visibility apparel. One memo suggests workers should purchase lime-colored vests to differentiate them from cones or signs.

Source: FHWA news release, October 3, 2008

International Traffic Safety News

Toyota's Rear Airbag Helps Protect Passengers' Heads in Crashes

Toyota has developed the world's first rear-window curtain shield airbag. The airbag will appear in the upcoming Japanese market iQ microcar and will protect rear passengers' heads in a rear-end crash. The airbags work with the headrests to minimize impact to the head from a crash, helping to reduce injuries. Source: CNET, September 30, 2008



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





Car-Sharing Programs Becoming More Popular in Canada

More and more Canadian companies are opting for a car-sharing program for corporate use with an option for employees to purchase discount share memberships for personal use. Karo Group bought a fuel-efficient car for its employees to sign out when visiting clients, but the company also allows employees to request the car for personal use. The Co-operative Auto Network (CAN) says sign-up by businesses and organizations for its pool of 225 vehicles is growing tremendously. "The cost of owning and operating vehicles is grossly expensive and so is the cost of fuel," CAN's executive director said. "For businesses, this is an effective company car program which works well."

Source: Business Fleet, October 2, 2008

Number of At-Work Crashes Stays Steady

More than 30,000 cars in Great Britain were involved in at-work crashes last year, only a slight reduction from 2006. The Department for Transport figures show that at least one in 12 cars involved in crashes were on the road for work at the time, though there could be thousands more "hidden" crashes. More than three-quarters of crashes reported on police forms have their journey purpose marked as "other" or "unclassified." The road charity, Brake said the figures show police need to be better trained to properly record the crashes. RoadSafe is leading the government-backed Driving for Better Business program to share best practices about risk management with the fleet industry.

Source: FleetNews, October 2, 2008

Bumblebees Inspire Nissan's New Crash-Avoidance Technology

The engineers at Nissan Motor Co.'s Advanced Technology Center are taking a cue from the bumblebee to design the next generation of crash-avoidance systems. The Biomimetic Car Robot Drive, or BR23C, is a robotic micro-car that mimics bee characteristics to produce a system that prevents crashes. Bees' compound eyes allow them to see more than 300 degrees, which lets the bee fly uninterrupted in an oval of personal space. Based on that concept, Nissan engineers created the Laser Range Finder, which detects objects two meters away from the vehicle within a 180-degree radius. "The split second it detects an obstacle, the car robot will mimic the movements of a bee and instantly change direction by turning its wheels at right angles or greater to avoid a collision," said the project's principal engineer. For more information, go to http://www.nissan-global.com/EN/NEWS/2008/_STORY/080926-01-e.html

Source: Nissan news release, September 26, 2008

Japanese Researchers Work to Eliminate Blind Spots

University of Tokyo researchers are working on a system to eliminate blind spots from cars by projecting a view of what lies beyond pillars and other obstructions. A pair of stereo cameras gathers images and feeds them into a driver's headset. The headset projects the video to a retro-reflective surface covering opaque parts of the interior. The driver then gets the impression there are no visual obstructions. One major hurdle to the project is cost, but researchers also find it does not work well when a front-seat passenger is riding in the car. A potential application is large trucks, where drivers often struggle to see smaller vehicles. For more information, go to <http://www.traffictoday.com/news.php?NewsID=8510>

Source: Traffic Technology International, October 9, 2008

British Fleets Cut Back on Buying New Vehicles

As the economic situation in Great Britain worsens, businesses have been cutting back on the number of new fleet vehicles they purchase. Light commercial vehicle registrations were down by 22.1 percent last month, and fleet new car registrations dropped by 16.1 percent. Fleet new car sales started well this year but fell sharply and went into a double-digit decline the past two months. Dealers are being hit hard, and several British franchise dealerships have thrown in the towel. The market might not stabilize until third quarter 2009, analysts say. Source: FleetNews, October 9, 2008

Drivers Don't Take Frowning Faces Seriously

For the most part, drivers are ignoring roadside signs that frown at them when they exceed the speed limit. The radar devices, which flash a smile if a driver is under the limit and a frowning face when they speed, are touted as a cheaper alternative to speed cameras and radar guns. But motorists only slow down for the first week before quickly resuming their bad habits, a study by the Transportation Research Laboratory found. Even in the first week, drivers



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





start to speed up a few seconds after passing the signs. After three weeks, speeding is just as bad as it was before.

For more information, go to

http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/transport/article4878848.ece

Source: The Times, October 4, 2008

New Cameras Track Drivers to Calculate Speed

Police are testing a new generation of speed cameras that can track drivers for up to 30 miles. The cameras could cover whole areas of cities or subdivisions and would stop drivers from braking suddenly before a camera to evade a ticket. The cameras already are in use on motorways, but they're likely to appear soon on rural and urban roads. So far they've reduced fatalities by 50 percent and encourage smoother traffic flow and more-consistent driving behavior. They work by recording a license plate when a vehicle enters a restricted speed zone and again when it leaves. If a driver's average speed is above the limit, he or she gets a ticket in the mail. The Transportation minister says the cameras would be a key weapon in the fight to reduce traffic deaths, but critics say they're another tool in the government's war on motorists. For more information, go to <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1074351/No-escape-new-generation-speed-cameras-follow-30-miles.html> Source: Daily Mail, October 9, 2008

Safety Policies Help Company Cut Crashes by 20%

Kaba Door Systems has cut its crash rate by 20 percent by implementing a multi-faceted action plan to protect workers. Half of Kaba's 175-vehicle fleet is vans, and the rest are company cars. One of Kaba's new policies is that all new vehicles must come with electronic stability control. The company also introduced a financial liability policy, where drivers must pay 50 percent of the cost of a second at-fault crash and 100 percent for a third occurrence. The fleet manager visits depots anonymously to inspect vehicle records, and managers enforce monthly vehicle checks and driver logs. The government named Kaba a business champion under its Driving for Better Business program. Source: FleetNews, October 6, 2008

Public Sector Not Focusing on Gray Fleet

Despite the Corporate Manslaughter Act that went into effect in April, public sector organizations are failing to address their gray fleet risk, a leading road safety expert says. Graham Feest, secretary of the Association of Industrial Road Safety Officers, singles out emergency services as being among the worst culprits when it comes to managing employees who use their personal vehicles for work. Several organizations that are making strides in other safety areas are not making the same progress with their gray fleets. For example, Gateshead Council recently was named a business champion of the government's Driving for Better Business program, but Gateshead has no policy in place for managing its gray fleet. Source: FleetNews, October 6, 2008

New Program Embarks on Young, Working Driver Research

Because young drivers and work-related driving are two of the biggest traffic safety challenges, the Department of Transport is starting the Young Drivers at Work project to tackle both at the same time. The project seeks the views of managers who oversee 17- to 24-year-old drivers and hopes to provide the most comprehensive view of the issues employers and young drivers face. Employers can take online surveys over the next three months, and the results will be compiled into a major report due in March 2009. Employers are asked to compare young drivers to more experienced drivers and report on the policies they have in place regarding novice drivers. The young drivers will give their input in focus groups throughout the project. For more information, go to www.rosipa.com/roadsafety/youngdriversatwork/ until December. Source: FleetNews, October 6, 2008



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





Work-Home

Some Booster Seats Don't Pass Test of Proper Fit

Booster seats help protect children because they reposition seat belts designed for adults in the right spot to restrain 4- to 8-year-olds in a crash. But the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that 13 of 41 booster seats tested did such a poor job of improving seat belts' fit that IIHS doesn't recommend their use. Ten models are best bets, and five more are good bets. The evaluations—for fit, not crash protection—are the first to tell consumers how well boosters work in cars, minivans and SUVs. Some of the boosters that aren't recommended could increase belt use by making them more comfortable, but they don't position belts for optimal protection. The University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute tested backless and high-back boosters. Source: IIHS news release, October 1, 2008

Ford's Programmable Key Encourages Teens to be Safer Drivers

Ford Motor Co.'s new MyKey technology is designed to help parents encourage their teens to drive safer and more fuel efficiently. MyKey will debut as standard equipment on the 2010 Ford Focus and will become standard on many other Ford, Lincoln and Mercury models. It allows users to program a key that can limit the vehicle's top speed and audio volume. MyKey also provides earlier low-fuel warnings and can be programmed to sound chimes at 45, 55 and 65 miles per hour. If drivers don't wear their seat belts, a persistent chime continues at regular intervals and the audio is muted until the belt is buckled. About half of those who would consider purchasing MyKey said they would allow their children to drive more often with this technology. Only 36 percent of teens would object to MyKey if it meant they had more driving privileges. For more information, go to http://media.ford.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=29172
Source: Ford news release, October 6, 2008