



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers September 15, 2008

Take the High Road
Share the Road • It Belongs to Everyone

Drive Safely Work Week 2008
October 6-10

Drive Safely Work Week, October 6-10, 2008 – You Still Have Time To Get Involved!

On average, your workers are more likely to die (on or off the job) from a traffic crash than any other cause. One of the best ways to keep employees safe on the road is to educate them about safety and promote safe driving practices. That's why we're inviting you to be a part of the National Drive Safely Work Week Campaign, October 6-10, 2008, sponsored by the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety. Employers across Michigan and the nation are taking this opportunity to improve the safety and health of their employees by preventing traffic related deaths and injuries. For **free resources and ideas** on how to get involved visit <http://www.trafficsafety.org/dsww08/dsww.asp>. All you have to do to receive the free resources is to register and answer several very brief questions about your company.

Employers Start Compensating Bike Commuters

For years companies have provided employees incentives to encourage them to use public transportation. Typically, people who ride their bicycles to work aren't eligible, even though they spend money on shoes, lights, helmets and other equipment, as well as maintenance and repairs. But now some employers are starting to compensate workers for biking in from home. The National Institutes of Health gives employees a "bike buck" for every 100 miles they ride to work. The bucks can be used at two local bike shops for gear. Discovery Communications reimburses its workers \$350 when they buy a bike. Humana provides bikes for getting around its campus, and Google gives bikes and helmets to its full-time employees. For more information, go to <http://blog.wired.com/cars/2008/08/corporate-ameri.html>. Source: Wired, August 29, 2008

Delaware Officials Urge Motorcyclists to Ride Safely During Bike Week

Eight motorcyclists have died in the past month in Delaware crashes, bringing the state's total of motorcycle fatalities to 15 for the year. That's only two less than in all of 2007. The causes of the crashes were speed and failure to negotiate curves, according to police. State highway officials urge motorcyclists to slow down and ride defensively. The State Office of Highway Safety is kicking off its "Ride Safe, Ride Smart" campaign to coincide with this month's Delmarva Bike Week. Nine billboards and 15-second radio ads will remind motorcyclists to ride safely. Source: The News Journal, September 4, 2008

Latest Traffic Safety News

Fewer Americans Traveled this Labor Day Holiday

AAA Chicago predicted the number of Americans traveling during Labor Day weekend would decline 0.9 percent, or 320,000 fewer Americans than the 34.7 million who traveled last year. Most (83 percent) vacationers planned to



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travel by car. They spent about 38 cents less a gallon than over the Fourth of July holiday, but 91 cents more than for Labor Day 2007. Car rental prices rose about 2 percent. The rest of the travelers flew on a plane (11.5 percent) or traveled by train, bus or other mode of transportation (5 percent).

Crash Test Differences Make Importing European Models Difficult

Conflicting safety regulations are hindering efforts to bring fuel-efficient European vehicles to the United States in a timely manner. European regulators, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety all have different crash tests that determine their public ratings. Ford has promised to bring six fuel-efficient models from Europe in 2010 but must satisfy governments' varying requirements. Now, automakers must do extra engineering to make different vehicle versions for different markets. Ford recently studied 43 regulations in Europe and the U.S. and found only 11 were equivalent. Source: Automotive Fleet, September 4, 2008

Minnesota County Sends Drunk Driving Postcard to Every Household

This month the Stearns County Safe Communities Coalition will send a postcard that depicts the dangers of drinking and driving to every household in the Minnesota county. The card features statistics about alcohol-related crashes and steps people should take to stay safe. "We want this reminder to reach everyone and make them think before driving after drinking or getting in the car with a driver who's been drinking," the public health division director said. During the last three years, 17 people died and 203 were seriously injured in drunk driving crashes in the county. One in eight Minnesota drivers has a DUI on their record. For more information, go to

http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/625_6644.htm

Source: Stearns County, Minnesota news release, August 29, 2008

Eco-Driving Can Increase Fuel Economy 24%

Ford Motor Company tests show that motorists who receive eco-driving advice can improve the fuel economy performance of their vehicles. These specific driving behaviors can help save money, reduce emissions and promote safe driving. Ford and Pro Formance Group piloted a program for fleet customers that would employ master trainers to coach drivers how to maximize mileage. Drivers who received individual coaching saw an average 24 percent improvement in fuel economy. Eco-driving instructors taught volunteers how to employ smoother braking and accelerating, monitor their RPMs and drive a moderate speed. Drivers can also drive 55 mph instead of 65 mph, keep tires properly inflated and eliminate idling. For more information, go to

http://media.ford.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=28946 Source: Media.ford.com

Partners Promote Awareness of Poor Vision, Drowsy Driving

The Vision Council and the National Sleep Foundation are teaming up to educate drivers about two overlooked hazards: poor vision and drowsy driving. In a recent survey, 38 percent of respondents complained of eye strain, 34 percent reported dry or tired eyes, 25 percent were fatigued, and 18 percent couldn't focus while driving at night. The fatality rate at nighttime is three times higher than the daytime rate, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and National Safety Council. More than 11 million Americans have uncorrected vision problems that affect their ability to drive safely. The 2008 Sleep in America poll found that 64 percent of full-time workers have driven while drowsy in the past year. More than a third actually fell asleep behind the wheel. The organizations recommend that drivers get regular eye exams, use their prescription eyewear, get enough sleep, take breaks and watch for signs of fatigue. Source: PR Newswire, August 22, 2008

Californians to Have Option of Paying for Insurance as They Drive

California's insurance commissioner recently made pay-as-you-drive insurance available for the state's drivers. Steve Poizner touted the insurance plan as an incentive to get people to drive fewer miles, thereby reducing greenhouse gases and traffic crashes. If 30 percent of Californians participate, the state could avoid 55 million tons of carbon dioxide between 2009 and 2020, which would have the same effect as taking 10 million cars off the road. It would save 5.5 billion gallons of gasoline and \$40 billion in car-related expenses. The new regulations, which will go



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into effect by fall 2009, will let insurers offer the plan to their customers. They could track mileage by odometer readings, repair records or a device used to collect mileage data. Poizner does not believe GPS has a place in verifying mileage for privacy and public policy reasons. For more information, go to http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/080827/auto_insurance_miles.html?.v=2 or <http://www.insurance.ca.gov/0400-news/0100-press-releases/0070-2008/release089-08.cfm>

Source: California Dept. of Insurance news release, August 27, 2008

Top 10 Reasons Telematics Are Important to Insurers

Telematics Update offers insurers 10 reasons why they should care about telematics. Firstly, the eCall system is capable of saving claims costs and lives, which fits with the insurance industry's priority of improving traffic safety. Next, GPS tracking devices reduce car thefts. Telematics also is efficient for fraud prevention, because basic vehicle data can help determine what caused a crash or why a car disappeared. It improves risk management for commercial fleets, and car data can provide insurers with information about driving behavior for calculating premiums. Telematics allows differentiation on grounds other than price, and drivers can save money when they prove through telematics that they're safe. Pay-as-you-drive insurance is now a reality. Ownership interests and the fact that many other companies care about telematics are the last two reasons insurers should too. For more information, go to <http://social.telematicsupdate.com/content/ten-reasons-why-insurance-industry-should-care-about-telematics> Source: Telematics Update, August 27, 2008

Alaska Bans Texting While Driving; Punishment Could Include Jail Time

Alaska drivers are now banned from texting while driving. They can read messages on their phones and BlackBerries, but it is a crime to write messages or watch videos behind the wheel. The law is a primary offense that could land a driver in jail. Texting while driving is a misdemeanor with a fine of up to \$5,000 and one year in jail—the same punishment as a first offense for driving under the influence. If a texting driver causes a crash that kills someone, the offense becomes a felony. While a handful of other states ban texting and using a handheld cell phone while driving, no state bans cell phone use outright. Drivers 16 to 24 years old are the most likely to use electronic devices behind the wheel, according to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study. For more information, go to <http://www.adn.com/news/government/story/512318.html> Source: Anchorage Daily News, September 1, 2008

Early Warning Data from Automakers Now Available

The federal government last week publicly released Early Warning data—information on specific products, vehicles and equipment linked to crashes involving death, injury and property damage—but information on tires and child safety seats was withheld. The most recent data available was from the first quarter of 2008. In that time period, General Motors reported complaints of 52 deaths and 610 injuries; Ford received reports of 40 deaths and 340 injuries; and Chrysler reported 23 deaths and 149 injuries. Also in the first three months of the year, Toyota advised of eight deaths and 106 injuries; Nissan reported seven deaths and 34 injuries; and Honda received allegations of three deaths and 22 injuries. The data often includes unsubstantiated claims and cannot be used to confirm safety problems, according to the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. Though they're required to report information by law, data from motorcycle companies, tire manufacturers and child-restraint producers are not yet publicly available. The companies are trying to block the data's release, saying the information contains trade secrets. Automakers agreed to waive their right to confidentiality.

Source: Los Angeles Times, September 11, 2008

News from USDOT

Secretary Peters Urges Congress to Relieve Funding Shortfall

Congress recently passed a measure that returns more than \$8 billion to the Highway Trust Fund that was sent to the general fund in 1998 as part of a budget deal. U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters said that while the administration warned of the impending shortfall, Congress continued to add to the spending authorized in the last



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surface transportation bill. Peters had urged Congress to approve legislation to cover the funding shortfall. She applauded legislators for acting quickly but implored them to address meaningful reforms in the way transportation funds are raised and invested. The funds will be available Sept. 30; in the meantime, the Federal Highway Administration is reimbursing states on a weekly basis instead of twice daily. It is also prorating payments, so if the funds only cover 80 percent of requests, 80 percent of each will be reimbursed. Peters emphasized that the current model of relying almost exclusively on gas taxes to fund the account is ineffective as more people are encouraged to drive fuel-efficient cars. Source:

USDOT News Releases, September 5 and 10, 2008

Transportation Secretary Suggests Tolls on Major Highways

Because Americans have been driving fewer miles, reduced gas sales have meant a sharp drop in tax revenues that fund road construction and maintenance. U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters suggests "direct pricing" for area highways, meaning tolls on all major roadways that would discourage use during peak driving periods. Drivers could be charged electronically. Though drivers seem hesitant, Secretary Peters predicts they'll come to accept congestion tolls in the future. For more information, go to

<http://www.myfoxdc.com/myfox/pages/News/Detail?contentId=7352457&version=1&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=TSTY&pageId=3.1.1> Source: WTTG-TV video, September 3, 2008

States Put Brakes on Highway Contracts

Because of the Highway Trust Fund crisis, states have had to delay millions of dollars of highway construction projects and replace federal funds with state money. "States are suspending new contract awards, halting right-of-way acquisition and looking for ways to stop ongoing construction while maintaining public safety," AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley said. More than a dozen states have released the effect of the federal default on their programs. That information is available on AASHTO's Web site, www.transportation.org Source: AASHTO news release, September 9, 2008

Research Finds Why Drivers Allow Distractions

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released a report that examines the decision process a driver undertakes when multitasking behind the wheel. The researchers used focus groups and an on-road study to determine why drivers decide to engage in potentially distracting activities. Four different age groups discussed the factors that influence their decision making while in the car. Volunteers drove their vehicles over a specified route and rated their willingness to engage in a task at specified points. They also answered questions about their familiarity with in-vehicle technologies. The researchers found drivers don't consider driving tasks or their surroundings much when deciding to engage in other tasks. Drivers were willing to use cell phones in almost all conditions; teens were the most willing to multitask. Potential countermeasures include public education, driver or device user training, warnings, criteria for function lock-outs and driver assist system criteria.

Source: NHTSA, March 2008

DOT Releases Drunk Driving Figures During Crackdown

Drunk driving fatalities are down nationwide and in 32 states, but the number of alcohol-related deaths is climbing among motorcyclists in half the states, according to new national figures. Last year about 13,000 people were killed in crashes where a vehicle operator had a blood alcohol concentration of at least 0.08, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters noted. Law enforcement agencies across the United States stepped up drunk driving enforcement during the Labor Day holiday period. The federal government also spent \$13 million in advertising to deliver the "Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest." message. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reached high-risk groups through traditional media as well as social media sites, Internet TV programming, mobile devices and PC-based video games. For more information, go to

<http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org/>

Source: USDOT news release, August 28, 2008



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Rural Teens Share Insights into Communicating with Younger Drivers

Teenagers are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers, even though they drive less than other age groups. Teens face an even greater challenge when they drive on rural roads. The mix of speeding, not buckling up, distracted driving, driving under the influence and inexperience often has deadly consequences. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Rural Safety Initiative partnered with National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS) to develop new advertising and educational campaigns to encourage teens to drive safely. U.S. Transportation Deputy Secretary Thomas Barrett met with six teens to discuss new ways to communicate with drivers their age.

Source: Secretarysblog, September 8, 2008

International Traffic Safety News

Portuguese President Mandates Electronic License Plates

All motor vehicles in Portugal will have electronic license plates after President Cavaco Silva approved Parliament's authorization of their use. The electronic plates provide both visual information like traditional license plates as well as electronic communication. The electronic information will be used for automatic vehicle identification, toll collection and identification of special vehicles. Once installed, the police will be able to monitor highway vehicles through radio frequency. Other applications include automatic restriction of areas to certain vehicles, traffic control and theft protection. Some groups opposed the measure based on privacy rights and personal data protection, but the government assured them necessary protections would be included in the new law. The new electronic license plates will cost drivers 10 euros, and they must be installed within the next six months.

Source: Euro-Weekly News, September 4, 2008

New 'Buckle Lifter' Helps Elderly, Disabled Fasten Belts

A German company has developed the Active Buckle Lifter (ABL) to make fastening seat belts easier. TRW Automotive GmbH created the device to assist the elderly and people with mobility challenges. The ABL raises the buckle to make it easier for occupants to locate and fasten the belt. The ABL can also retract the buckle to reduce belt slack during hard-braking maneuvers. When the door is open, the buckle rises approximately 100mm, putting it within easier reach of passengers. Once fastened, the buckle returns to its normal position. Source: Automotive Fleet, September 4, 2008

Internet Maps, Satellites Diminish Ability to Navigate

Because of satellite navigation, many drivers now concentrate only on going from point A to point B without noticing where they are or how they got there, according to the president of the British Cartographic Society. She worries the locations of thousands of landmarks could disappear from the public consciousness. Adults are becoming "scared" of reading a traditional map, and children are growing up without basic navigation skills, she suggests. She also says Internet maps are often inaccurate, but others claim the maps have led to the "democratization" of cartography. They allow people to update maps in instances of flooding or other road blockages. For more information, go to <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2639307/Map-reading-skills-dying-out-due-to-internet-and-satnavs.html>

Source: Telegraph, August 29, 2008

Green Driving Techniques Help Novice and Experienced Drivers Save Fuel

New drivers are receiving additional training about how to drive in a way that saves money, fuel and emissions as part of their driving test. The United Kingdom will also spend millions to promote green driving or eco-driving techniques to motorists who already have licenses. Following eco-driving techniques can save a month's worth of fuel every year, according to the Department for Transport. All drivers can make these simple changes, such as keeping tires inflated to the proper level, keeping revs low and reducing clutter in the trunk. Ads that promote smart driving tips are on the radio now, and a TV campaign will follow early next year. Source: FleetNews, September 10, 2008



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Work-Home

NTSB Chairman Voices Opposition to Lowering Legal Drinking Age

National Transportation Safety Board Acting Chairman Mark V. Rosenker says he is opposed to recent efforts to lower the legal drinking age because current laws have effectively prevented deaths and injuries. "Repealing them is a terrible idea," Rosenker said. "It would be a national tragedy to turn back the clock and jeopardize the lives of more teens." The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that age 21 laws have prevented more than 25,000 deaths through 2006. Before most of the age 21 laws were enacted, 56 percent of teen drivers killed in crashes had an illegal blood alcohol content. By 2006, that figure dropped 31 percentage points to 25 percent. Rosenker urged the college administrators who signed the Amethyst pledge to reconsider and help enforce their state laws.

Source: NTSB news release, August 28, 2008

Research Shows Real-Life Stories Help Promote Booster Seat Use

A new National Highway Traffic Safety Administration report examines why parents with a high-school education or lower are less likely to use booster seats and what interventions are most likely to encourage their use. Overcoming parents' perceived barriers to booster seat use and highlighting the benefits are critical to promoting the seats for children ages 4 to 8. Researchers used focus groups to identify factors that influence parents' current child restraint use and then another set of focus groups to test interventions. Lack of education and fear of injury were the most common barriers, and clear, concrete instructions about use were the most effective intervention. A real story that details a child's serious injury was the intervention parents favor most. They were not as motivated by messages about the child's comfort, even though they cited discomfort as a barrier. For more information, go to

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles//DOT/NHTSA/Traffic%20Injury%20Control/Articles/Associated%20Files/811018.pdf> Source: NHTSA news release, September 9, 2008

Report Recommends Raising the Driving Age

Raising the age new drivers can get their licenses would save many lives, according to a report from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Most states allow teens to drive unsupervised between age 16 and 16 ½. In 2005, about 64 of every 100,000 16-year-old drivers were involved in a fatal crash, compared with 59 out of every 100,000 17-year-olds. Some opponents of raising the driving age say the change would simply delay deaths and that inexperience, not age, is what leads to the high rate of fatal crashes. Lawmakers in Delaware, Florida and Georgia considered raising the minimum driving age to 17, and bills in Illinois and Massachusetts would have raised the age to 18. All failed in the last legislative session. "From the state perspective, we think the new report ... is a conversation starter," said a spokesman for the Governors Highway Safety Association. "We think it's worth a dialogue and more research." For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-09-09-teen-drivers_N.htm

Source: USA Today, September 9, 2008



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