



Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers March 17, 2008

Latest Traffic Safety News

Smaller Cities Harder Hit by Traffic Crashes

Traffic crashes cost Americans \$164.2 billion a year, but smaller cities suffer the biggest per-person toll. According to a AAA study, traffic crashes are more damaging to society than frustrating congestion. The annual cost of congestion is \$67.6 billion. Researchers took factors such as property damage, lost earnings, medical costs, emergency services, legal costs and travel delays into account. The country's largest cities lose billions of dollars a year from crashes, but residents of smaller cities such as Little Rock, Pensacola, Fla. and Columbia, S.C. pay more per person. AAA recommends that lawmakers make traffic safety a priority in transportation planning, support tougher laws regarding drunk driving and pass primary seat belt laws. For more information, go to <http://www.lsj.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080305/NEWS01/80305003/1001/news> or <http://www.aaanewsroom.net/Main/Default.asp?CategoryID=7&ArticleID=596>

Source: The Associated Press, March 5, 2008

Report Shows Stronger Roofs Would Save Lives

More than 200 deaths could have been prevented in rollovers in 2006 if a few more SUVs had stronger roofs, according to a report just released by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). The report counters automakers' claims that there's no connection between roof strength and passenger safety. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) hasn't upgraded the standard for roof strength since 1971 but is finalizing an upgrade that would save 13 to 44 lives a year. The 1971 standard requires a roof to be able to hold 1.5 times the vehicle's weight, but now NHTSA is looking at tripling that number. "What we do know from this study is that strengthening a vehicle's roof reduces injury risk and reduces it a lot," IIHS President Adrian Lund said. IIHS researchers compared injury and death rates in four-door SUVs without stability control or side-curtain air bags. The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers calls the report "flawed." Automakers contend that occupants in a crash hit the vehicle's roof, not the other way around. Because two-thirds of people who die in rollover crashes aren't buckled, NHTSA has focused on getting motorists to wear seat belts to prevent rollover fatalities. For more information, go to <http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/pdf/r1098.pdf>

Source: USA Today, March 12, 2008

Study Uses Brain Scans to Show Cell Phone Conversations Distract Drivers

Although five states, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands prohibit hand-held phones but allow hands-free devices, a Carnegie Mellon study concluded that listening to conversations on a cell phone is distracting for drivers. Therefore, allowing hands-free phones "really gives drivers a false sense of safety," a spokesman for the Governors Highway Safety Association said. Researchers studied 29 volunteers who used a driving simulator inside an MRI brain scanner. Listening while driving led to deterioration in driving accuracy, according to the report in the latest issue of Brain Research. Instead of banning cell phones, the study's authors recommend educating drivers of the dangers and advising them to pull over or keep conversations brief if they need to use a cell phone. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2008-03-09-drivers-listening-cellphone_N.htm

Source: USA Today, March 9, 2008



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New Jersey Bans Hand-held Phones for Drivers, but Hand-free Phones Just as Dangerous

Law enforcement officers in New Jersey now can pull over and fine motorists for driving while using a hand-held cell phone, but studies suggest hands-free conversations are no safer. "They are sending a message that hands-free phoning is OK, when the mounting evidence is that it's not," said Russ Rader, spokesman for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Officials started tracking hands-free and hand-held conversations in traffic crashes in 2006, and found the two were evenly split. Data shows cell phone use increases the risk of a crash fourfold and can be as significant as alcohol impairment. The primary sponsor of New Jersey's bill said responsible drivers can conduct business in the car responsibly while contributing to the economy. New Jersey is now one of two states that prohibit texting while driving. For more information, go to

<http://www.nj.com/news/ledger/index.ssf?base/news-13/1204177085113690.xml&coll=1>

Source: The Star-Ledger, February 28, 2008

Traffic Flow Timing Interrupted by Distracted Drivers

Distracted driving has another negative side-effect: Inattentive drivers are throwing a wrench into traffic flow controlled by timed signals. A delay of only two or three seconds between the time the light turns green and a driver presses the gas pedal messes up miles of signal-light timing. "Drivers' expectations are a little different than ours," a transportation engineer said. "They expect to be getting green lights forever until they decide to turn off and it doesn't really work that way."

Source: The Arizona Republic, February 29, 2008

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Source: The Arizona Republic, February 29, 2008

Drivers Open to Assistance, Won't Give up Control

Consumers are interested in systems that detect objects in their blind spots, but they aren't willing to give up control. Half of the respondents in a Harris Interactive AutoTECHCAST study expressed an interest in purchasing blind spot detection technology in their next vehicle; three in 10 were interested in lane departure warning technology. Almost 75 percent of the respondents said they prefer the vehicle warn them about an object in the blind spot instead so they can manually avoid a collision.

"When we start to look at technologies that can take the helm and steer the vehicle, we have to understand we could be infringing on drivers' comfort zones, which is the exact opposite of the technology's intent," a Harris Interactive employee said. For more information, go to

<http://motorage.search-autoparts.com/motorage/Custom+Service/Study-shows-drivers-want-assistance-but-dont-want-/ArticleStandard/Article/detail/499838?contextCategoryId=43145> or

<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=1283>

Source: Motor Age, March 4, 2008

States Try Different Tactics for Keeping Suspended Drivers off Roads

Even with revoked licenses, drivers stay behind the wheel to get where they need to go. Lawmakers across the country are trying to find ways to stop the nearly 80 percent of people with suspended licenses who keep driving. These drivers are 3.7 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than those with valid licenses, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. A Virginia legislator introduced a bill that would require a special license plate for anyone convicted of a third driving under



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the influence conviction. The state is also considering ignition interlocks for DUI offenders who violate the terms of their alcohol awareness programs. California's solution of impounding vehicles of people who drive on suspended licenses has reduced the problem by 20 percent. A program in Iowa allows people with many points on their licenses to avoid suspension by taking a class and staying on probation for a year. MADD's three recommendations are to immobilize vehicles and require ignition interlocks, introduce sanctions that include fines and promote alcohol assessment and treatment. Source: Lynchburg News Advance

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Source: The Arizona Republic, February 29, 2008

Work a Major Cause of Sleepless Nights

Americans average 6 hours and 40 minutes of sleep a night during the workweek, even though they need another 40 minutes to be at their best, the National Sleep Foundation's 2008 Sleep in America poll discovered. About a third of the 1,000 people surveyed had fallen asleep or become very sleepy at work in the past month. And 36 percent admitted to nodding off or falling asleep behind the wheel in the past year. Shift workers are the most likely (48 percent) to report drowsy driving. Work is what's keeping them up at night: Workdays are getting longer, and people are spending four and a half hours a week working from home. "When work and daily activities demand so much of our time, sleep is often sacrificed," NSF's acting CEO said. The average wake-up time is 5:35 a.m. and bedtime is 10:53 p.m. For more information, go to <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/site/c.hulXKjM0lxF/b.3933533/>

Source: National Sleep Foundation, March 3, 2008

Automakers Should Embrace Consumer Electronics

To foster economic growth and innovation, domestic automakers should support free-trade policies and develop standards for in-vehicle electronics, said Gary Shapiro, president and CEO of the Consumer Electronics Association. Research shows that consumers want their information and entertainment devices to work inside their cars. A quarter of the driving-age population plans to purchase such products this year. "There's a better way going toward the future and that is to develop an agreed-upon industry standard which allows all future electronics to connect in without having to work around each car," Shapiro said. The trick is to allow people to use things like their phone in the car without causing a distraction.

Congestion Costs Businesses in Delays, Fuel

At the "Infrastructure—A Path to Prosperity" conference at Iona College in New Rochelle, N.Y., participants discussed the dire needs of the U.S. transportation industry. More than four-fifths of the country's commodities are transported over highways. Congestion cost 42 billion hours of travel delay in 2007 and 2.9 million more gallons of fuel. General Mills says it loses \$2 million for each mile per hour trucks must travel below the speed limit; UPS says its losses are \$40 million. Highway capacity is not meeting the demand for freight—40 percent of all roadways will hit capacity in the next 15 years. Every billion dollars spent on infrastructure creates 47,000 jobs. A national commission on infrastructure is needed to administer the funds necessary over the next five years to fix the problems. For more information, go to http://www.automotivedigest.com/view_art.asp?articlesID=23975 (may require free registration). Source: Fleet Owner, February 20, 2008



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Reading No. 1 Distraction for New Jersey Drivers

AAA Clubs of New Jersey poll shows that while cell phones are distracting, they're only No. 4 on the list of top driver distractions. The top distraction in New Jersey is reading newspapers, maps and magazines while driving. Punching keys on a computer or Blackberry came in second, with people grooming themselves in the rearview mirror claiming third place. Eating and drinking ranked fifth. "We've been saying all along there are distractions just as dangerous as cell phone and text messaging," a spokesman for AAA Mid-Atlantic said. AAA has been asking for a driver distraction bill for years. For more information, go to <http://www.nj.com/timesoftrenton/stories/index.ssf?/base/news-4/1204868733177310.xml&coll=5> Source: The Star-Ledger, March 7, 2008

Yellow Arrow Tells Drivers to Yield When Turning Left

Traffic engineers in North Carolina are testing a new traffic light in Charlotte. Intersections are slowly being fitted with flashing yellow arrows. In a decade or two, it could become common across the country. A solid green arrow tells drivers they can make a protected turn, while the flashing yellow light replaces a solid green ball to warn drivers they must yield to oncoming traffic if they want to turn left. "At first it confused me," one motorist said. "I was wondering why they did it -- it just went from a straight green to a flashing yellow light. It didn't change much." The city said there were fewer crashes after the light was installed. For more information, go to <http://www.charlotte.com/212/story/529798.html> Source: The Charlotte Observer, March 10, 2008

Florida Report Shows Intersection Cameras Lead to More Crashes

A day after Hillsborough County (Fla.) commissioners voted to allow cameras at 10 intersections, the University of South Florida published a study that finds intersection cameras increase the number of crashes. "People see a yellow light and normally they would drive through it, but at camera intersections they do the quick stop. They slam on the brakes and that means everybody else behind them slams on the brakes," one of the study's co-authors said. The researchers looked at five other intersection camera studies and called two of them flawed. The study shows red-light running is not an increasing problem in Florida, accounting for less than 4 percent of traffic deaths. For more information, go to <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/mar/12/na-red-light-cameras-increase-accidents-usf-study-/> Source: Tampa Tribune, March 12, 2008

DownShift: For the Professional Drivers' Health & Safety

Welcome to DownShift, the first and only resource for professional drivers focusing on CDL health requirements and overall health and wellness. The DownShift program was developed to provide the professional driver the following information: resources and information about improving their health; to advise the driver on healthier habits that will work with their lifestyle; to explain the special health guidelines they have to meet in order to maintain their CDL, and; to assist the professional driver when talking to their doctor, so that they can develop a plan that meets their special needs as a driver. For more information please link to: <http://www.drivershealth.com/index.jsp>

News from USDOT

Overview of 2006 Large Truck Crash Data Available

The U.S. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration issued a report that's an overview of large truck crash data by trends, vehicles, drivers and crash environment for 2006. For more information, go to <http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/CarrierResearchResults/PDFs/2006LargeTruckCrashOverview.pdf>



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Companies Urge FMCSA to Retain 11th Hour, 34-Hour Restart

Several large fleets, such as UPS, have asked the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to keep the 11th hour of driving and 34-hour restart in the hours-of-service regulations. The carriers said the rules improved highway safety and gave drivers the flexibility to adjust to unexpected delays. "UPS has not experienced adverse safety effects resulting from use of the 11-hour driving rule," the company's vice president wrote to the FMCSA. The comment deadline has been extended until March 17. Con-way Truckload and Schneider International also reported a reduction in crashes since the rule was instituted.

Groups Will Field Test Technology to Improve Safety, Reduce Congestion

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration is funding \$3 million to private industry, research organizations and state and local governments to reduce congestion and improve safety through testing deployment-ready technologies. The SafeTrip-21 project's goal is to provide drivers with real-time safety warnings, traffic information and advanced navigational tools. The selected test sites and technology applications will be evaluated in a year-long field test. The test will begin after an exhibition of capabilities during the Intelligent Transportation Systems World Congress in New York City in November. For more information, go to <http://www.fbo.gov/spg/DOT/RITA/VNTSC/DTRT57%2D08%2DR%2D20021/listing.html>

NHTSA Releases Impaired Driving Materials

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers several sources of information about impaired driving. The administration's Traffic Safety Legislative Fact Sheets contain research and information about laws that states may consider to enact. For a list of all 2008 Traffic Safety Legislative Fact Sheets, go to <http://www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.e649cd1b2b018c71d8eca01046108a0c/> and, under the heading Articles, click on "Traffic Safety Legislative Fact Sheets." Also, the Final Edition of the 2006 Traffic Safety Facts annual report is now available. This edition contains updates to exposure data and fatality rates. To download the PDF, go to <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/TSF2006FE.PDF> . Lastly, NHTSA has posted the 24th edition of its Digest of Impaired Driving and Selected Beverage Control Laws. The volume is current as of January 2007 and contains an extensive compilation of these laws in all states. To download the 630-page document, go to <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/Traffic%20Injury%20Control/Articles/Associated%20Files/HS810827.pdf>

International Traffic Safety News

Workers More Likely to Eat on the Run

One in seven fleet drivers eats while driving at least once a week, according to research by road safety charity Brake. People driving for work are far more likely to eat in the car—only one in 25 other drivers admit to the bad habit. The survey results show that at-work drivers are more likely to multitask behind the wheel. Brake urges firms to instruct employees never to eat while driving. "Drivers must plan regular breaks on long journeys to allow time to eat, as well as to ensure they aren't driving tired," said Cathy Keeler, Brake's head of campaigns. The charity also calls for more enforcement to target those who eat and drive. Source: FleetNews, March 3, 2008



Insurers Don't Change Rates for Vehicles with ESC

Even though electronic stability control (ESC) has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of crashes, insurers are not considering the systems when new cars are assessed. Cars with ESC can be placed in the same insurance groups as cars with no safety systems at all, so there is no insurance-related incentive for fleets to adopt ESC. In fact, cars with ESC could be placed in a higher insurance group because they cost more to repair. The Association of British Insurers claims ESC's benefits are hard to quantify so they should not be taken into account. Some fleet managers demand that manufacturers supply ESC as a no-cost option. Source: FleetNews, March 3, 2008

Speed Report Offers Best Practices

The Global Road Safety Partnership issued "Speed Management, A Road Safety Manual for Decision-Makers and Practitioners," a report that provides guidance about implementing traffic safety measures that are proven to reduce deaths and injuries from crashes. For more information, go to <http://www.grsproadsafety.org/themes/default/pdfs/Speed%20management%20manual.pdf>

Volvo Will Test Fatigued Driver System for Trucks on Public Roads

The Swedish government will allow Volvo Trucks to test a drowsy driver alert system with fatigued drivers on public roadways. "Our request for an exemption from normal traffic regulations is part of our development of technical systems that detect and warn a driver of fatigue and inattentiveness in traffic," Volvo Trucks' safety director said. "The objective is to make these safety systems available in our trucks." Volvo's system monitors the way the driver operates the vehicle; when the driver becomes inattentive, the pattern of movement changes and the driver is alerted. Volvo will test the system on public roads because no test tracks are adequate. Two drivers will be in each vehicle and will drive only on certain roads. The truck will be clearly marked and will be followed by a car that alerts other motorists a test is underway. For more information, go to http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20080228005535&newsLang=en Source: BusinessWire, February 28, 2008

Report Explores Best Practices for Assessing Medical Fitness to Drive

The Centre for Automotive Safety Research at the University of Adelaide, Australia, issued a report that examines methods for assessing medical fitness to drive. For more information about "Best Practice Criteria in Practical Driving Tests of Medically Referred Drivers," go to <http://casr.adelaide.edu.au/publications/researchreports/CASR013.pdf>

Literature Review Focuses on Driver Fatigue

Land Transport of New Zealand released a report that reviews literature on drowsy driving since 2000. To view the report, go to <http://www.landtransport.govt.nz/research/reports/342.pdf>

Work-Home

Training Gives Participants Resources to Teach Parents about Child Passenger Safety

A free half-day training course aimed at helping save children's lives on the roads is being offered to community leaders, health professionals, teachers and others who work with families. Attendees will be trained to give life-saving presentations to parents with young children about the risks and advice on safe driving. Topics include correctly restraining children in vehicles as well as pedestrian and bike safety. FedEx and Brake Road Safety Academy are providing the "Stay Safe Family Promise" training. It's available throughout the United Kingdom and can be set up in-house. Source: FleetNews, March 6, 2008



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Children Face Increased Risk of Fatal Crash when Riding with Teen Drivers

Some of the most dangerous circumstances for children in cars are riding unbuckled with new teen drivers on high-speed roads. A new study by State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co. found that these were the three biggest risk factors that contributed to traffic deaths for 8- to 17-year-old passengers. Of the 10,000 fatalities of child passengers studied, more than half were riding with a teen driver. Nearly two-thirds were not wearing seat belts, and more than three-quarters of the crashes happened on roads with a speed limit higher than 45 mph. Other dangerous circumstances involved drunk drivers, male teen drivers and driving on weekends. For more information, go to <http://www.komotv.com/news/national/16213327.html> Source: The Associated Press, March 4, 2008

Illinois Bill Would Let 14-year-olds Get Behind Wheel

An Illinois lawmaker is sponsoring a bill that would allow 14-year-olds to obtain learners permits. The idea is to give teens plenty of practice before they can get their license at 16. "I'm not asking for them to be able to jump in the car and drive down the road at 14," said Rep. Jim Sacia, R-Freeport. "I'm asking for them to be able to learn at a younger age." Sacia said the current law that allows 15-year-olds to apply for permits does not give teens enough time to fit in the required training and practice. Nine states allow kids younger than 15 to apply for learning permits. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety counters that allowing 14-year-olds to get learning permits could lead to more teens driving without a license.

More States Consider Requiring Booster Seats

Nine states are considering laws that would require children younger than 8 who grow out of child safety seats to ride in boosters. Three states enacted legislation last year. All 50 states require child safety seats for children younger than 4; 21 states require booster seats up to age 6; and 17 states and the District of Columbia require them until 8. Parents are more likely to use booster seats if a law requires it, according to a study last year by the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 41 percent of children ages 4-7 were put in booster seats regularly in 2006. Legislators who oppose booster seat laws cite concerns about cost to parents and difficulty of enforcement. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-03-06-boosterseats_N.htm Source: USA Today, March 6, 2008

Movement to Lower Drinking Age Gains Ground in Few States

A movement is underway to lower the drinking age in some states. Vermont's legislature has formed a task force to study whether the drinking age should be lowered. A petition is circulating in South Dakota to allow 19- and 20-year-olds the ability to buy beer no stronger than 3.2 percent alcohol, and a Missouri group is trying to collect 100,000 signatures to get a measure to lower the drinking age to 18 on the November ballot. Lawmakers in South Carolina and Wisconsin have proposed that military personnel younger than 21 be allowed to buy alcohol. These efforts face strong opposition from Congress, concerned parents and Mothers Against Drunk Driving. States must conform to the legal drinking age of 21 or risk losing 10 percent of federal highway funds. For more information, go to http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/lifestyle/health/chi-teen-drinking_bdm09,1,7909616.story (may require free registration). Source: Chicago Tribune, March 9, 2008