



# SAFETY Network

September 2020

Michigan.gov/ohsp

## Back-to-back *Drive Sober* campaigns run in summer

Due to shifting priorities brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, there were two *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaigns this summer. The first ran from July 1-19, covering the Fourth of July holiday, and the second ran from August 14 to September 7, covering the Labor Day holiday.

During the July enforcement period, 178 drivers were taken off Michigan roads and arrested. An additional 158 citations were issued for seat belt or car seat violations, and more than 1,300 speeding citations were issued.

Results of the August/September campaign will be available in mid-October.

"The aim of these campaigns is to drastically reduce deaths and serious injuries caused by impaired driving," said Michael L. Prince, Michigan Office of Highway Safety

Planning (OHSP) director. "This is a time for friends and family to enjoy the final days of summer. Impaired driving puts everyone at risk and is always unacceptable."

In Michigan, it is illegal to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher, although motorists can be arrested at any BAC level if an officer believes they are impaired. Michigan has what is commonly referred to as a zero-tolerance drugged driving law.

On average, a driving under the influence charge can result in \$10,000 in attorney fees, fines,

court costs, lost time at work, higher insurance rates, car towing, and repairs.

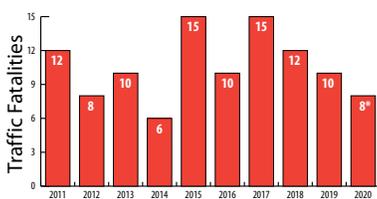
To increase awareness and encourage safe and sober driving, there was a paid media campaign, including a video titled *Toe Tags* that focuses on the tragic results of drugged driving. The video can be found at [www.youtube.com/ohsp](http://www.youtube.com/ohsp).



## Labor Day sees drop in traffic deaths

Preliminary reports show there were eight fatal traffic crashes resulting in eight fatalities over the 2020 Labor Day holiday. That's down from 10 fatalities in 2019. And it's the fewest number of fatalities for a Labor Day holiday since there were six in 2014.

LABOR DAY HOLIDAY



\*Preliminary

## NHTSA unveils recall app

Checking your vehicle for a recall just got a whole lot easier. In late August, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) launched a new smartphone app that will alert drivers if a recall has been issued for their vehicle.

Owners will just have to download the app and scan or key in their 17-digit vehicle identification number. The app then searches NHTSA's database and sends an alert if a recall has been issued. You will also be able to search car seats, tires, and trailers for recalls.

NHTSA says that one in four vehicles now on the road has an unrepaired recall, which is a safety risk.

Automakers must fix safety recall problems at no cost to owners. Last year, 53 million vehicles, car seats, tires and equipment were recalled, according to the agency.

To download the app, search "SaferCar" in either the Google Play or iTunes stores.

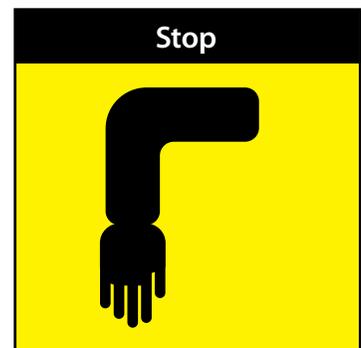
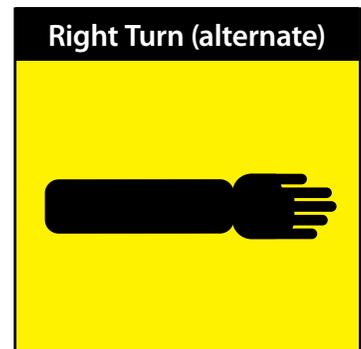
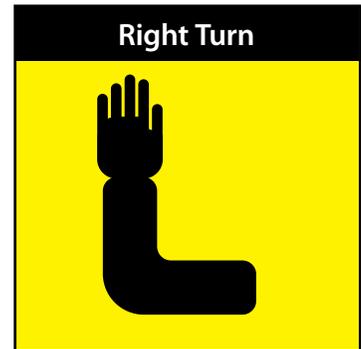
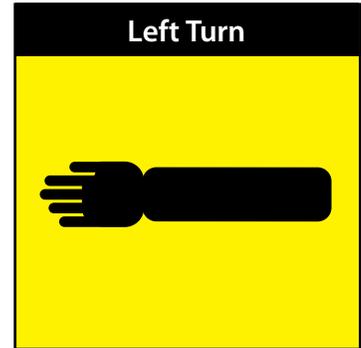




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## Bicycle traffic signals



## Campaign launched to help reduce bicyclist crashes

Overtime mobilization grants for September 9-15 were awarded to law enforcement agencies in seven Michigan cities—Detroit, Dearborn, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Muskegon, and Warren—to focus on the laws applicable to bicyclist safety to help reduce bicyclist injuries and fatalities. The OHSP identified these cities as having some of the highest number of bicycle-involved crashes over a five-year period.

“Motorists need to remember that bicyclists have an equal right to the road,” said Michael L. Prince, OHSP director. “When passing a bicyclist, it’s state law to give them at least three feet while doing so. Everyone needs to obey traffic signs and signals and stay alert for each other.”

Between 2015-2019, bicycle crash data for the seven Michigan cities show: Detroit with a total of 868 crashes; Grand Rapids with a total of 414; Lansing with a total of

213; Kalamazoo with a total of 194; Warren with a total of 151; Dearborn with a total of 116; and Muskegon with a total of 79.

Over the last five years, 137 people have been killed in bicyclist-involved crashes in Michigan.

During the campaign, officers focused on violations by drivers that include: illegal turns, failing to stop at a signal or stop sign, failing to give at least three feet when passing a bicyclist, and blocking a roadway that interferes with the normal flow of traffic. Officers focused on violations by bicyclists that include: not riding with traffic, not using lights when biking at night, and riding more than two abreast.

The enforcement campaign is supported with federal traffic safety funds provided by the United States Department of Transportation and the NHTSA and coordinated by the OHSP. Results of the campaign will be available in mid-October.

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## Traffic safety enforcement a priority during a pandemic

By Kinga Canike and Kenneth Stecker

An on-duty Michigan State Police (MSP) trooper died after he was hit by a drunk driver on July 10, 2020. Trooper Caleb Starr was driving down the road in Ionia County when a drunk driver crossed the center line and crashed head-on into his patrol vehicle. He was 33 years old and left behind a wife and two young daughters.<sup>1</sup> The 28-year-old out-of-state drunk driver's BAC was .23, nearly three times the legal limit in Michigan. She faces the following charges: Second-Degree Murder; Operating a Motor Vehicle with a High Blood Alcohol Content Causing Death; Driving While License Suspended Death; and Operating While Intoxicated.<sup>2</sup>

On June 4, 2020, a Monroe County Sheriff's deputy was seriously injured after another vehicle ran a red light and collided into her police vehicle. Twenty-four-year-old Darrian Young, an animal control officer for her department, died from her injuries two days later. The 44-year-old female driver is suspected of Driving Under the Influence at the time she broadsided Young's vehicle.<sup>3</sup>

Two Grand Rapids police officers were seriously injured on August 6, 2020, after a suspected drunk driver ran a red light and crashed into their on-duty cruiser.<sup>4</sup>

All three crashes above occurred during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic temporarily halted many governmental services and businesses around our state, but it did not stop impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel and causing death and serious injury on Michigan roads.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/local/2020/08/01/michigan-state-police-trooper-dies-after-being-struck-by-suspected-drunk-driver/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.woodtv.com/news/ionia-county/murder-charge-filed-in-crash-that-killed-msp-trooper/?fbclid=IwAR3wMu6XLT7mQnRNQxuNWNELnQ4SxXs1PX-8qHs5ZX8rt4PaveT\\_JaxobX4](https://www.woodtv.com/news/ionia-county/murder-charge-filed-in-crash-that-killed-msp-trooper/?fbclid=IwAR3wMu6XLT7mQnRNQxuNWNELnQ4SxXs1PX-8qHs5ZX8rt4PaveT_JaxobX4)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2020/06/animal-control-officer-dies-after-crash-with-suspected-drunk-driver.html>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.woodtv.com/news/grand-rapids/two-grpd-officers-hurt-in-early-morning-crash/?fbclid=IwAR16UUdTZvopd2HIAJQiggbR1No\\_2kX00boaG6RrJVoHJq5WH4R7x5PQEKU](https://www.woodtv.com/news/grand-rapids/two-grpd-officers-hurt-in-early-morning-crash/?fbclid=IwAR16UUdTZvopd2HIAJQiggbR1No_2kX00boaG6RrJVoHJq5WH4R7x5PQEKU)

Preliminary data shows that more people have been killed on Michigan roads this year compared to the same period last year. That's according to data compiled by the MSP, Criminal Justice Information Center Traffic Crash Reporting Unit. As of August 27, 2020, there were 608 crashes on Michigan roads that resulted in 649 crash fatalities. In August 27, 2019, that number was 570 crashes with 623 crash fatalities.<sup>5</sup>

Law enforcement agencies in our state have had to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic in how they handle traffic stop investigations. For the MSP, troopers assigned to the Sixth District Hometown Security Team (HST) out of the Rockford Post, that's meant minimizing unnecessary contact with individuals during traffic stops. According to Tpr. Eric Brogger, who works on this traffic enforcement and interdiction team, approaching stopped vehicles from the passenger side has helped put a safe distance between him and a stopped driver, considering there is no one in the passenger seat.

Another practice adopted by his team during the early months of the pandemic when infection and death rates were high was to run a stopped vehicle's license plate each time before approaching the vehicle. That allowed the troopers to approach the vehicle with the registered owner's information in hand. The driver would hold up the driver's license for the trooper. If it matched the information in the trooper's computer, he or she would not handle the license themselves. Drivers were asked to hold up their vehicle's registration and proof of insurance in the same manner. Other safety practices adopted by the Sixth District HST included using disposable gloves and masks during traffic stop investigations, putting masks on detainees, and regularly sanitizing patrol vehicles.

Brogger said maintaining social distancing during impaired driving investigations

can be trickier because of the nature of the investigation. In some instances, such as during the Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus test, close contact with a driver is unavoidable. But he says safety is still a priority during these investigations, and that includes maintaining a safe distance during the other field sobriety tests, using gloves and masks, and making sure that when the driver blows into the Preliminary Breath Test it is not pointed in the direction of the officer holding it.

Brogger said the pandemic also affected the type of violations they were looking for before conducting a stop. During the early months, the Sixth District HST stopped pulling over vehicles for license violations. The team continued stops for driving violations that posed a danger to road users, such as impaired driving and egregious speed violations. Traffic stops have gone up in the Sixth District as the state's COVID-19 numbers have gone down.

Brogger says there appears to be a mentality among the public that law enforcement is not making traffic stops due to the ongoing pandemic. He has seen an uptick in individuals speeding 20 miles per hour and more in the areas he patrols. For example, over one week-end this month he stopped four vehicles going over 100 miles per hour in southern Kent County.

Commercial motor vehicles have been keeping MC Lt Chris Keller busy during the pandemic. He works in the Commercial

*PAAM Continued on page 5 >*



<sup>5</sup> [https://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,4643,7-123-72297\\_24055\\_67691---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,4643,7-123-72297_24055_67691---,00.html)



## Four chances for error in motorcyclist-vehicle crashes

By Dan Petterson, President of Skilled Motorcyclist Association Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc.

### INTRODUCTION

Understanding the four chances for error and the associated visual phenomena is helpful in furthering our understanding of the Looked But Failed to See (LBFTS) Right-of-way Violation (ROWV) motorcyclist/car collision scenario. This knowledge is also helpful in formulating recommended actions for both riders and drivers that will lessen the chance of these types of collision occurring.

The human eyes and brain are not the equivalent of the lens of a camera. The commonsense argument that “if it is visible, we will see it if we look hard enough” simply isn’t true.



### 1. DIDN'T LOOK

Did the driver fail to look? If the driver is distracted or misunderstands the road layout, he or she might not look or might not look in the necessary direction.

- Riders need to be aware of situations that might be complicated for drivers, reduce speed, and be prepared to take evasive action.
- Drivers need to eliminate distractions while driving and take extra time to focus at unfamiliar road layouts.

### 2. LOOKED BUT COULDN'T SEE

The driver looks but the motorcyclist is not visible. If the motorcyclist is in the “wrong place”, e.g., behind a larger vehicle, or the motorcyclist is appropriately placed but the driver’s view of the motorcyclist is

blocked e.g., by the car pillar or a roadway obstacle like a light pole, the driver could look but fail to see the motorcyclist.

- Riders have the responsibility to ride in a position to be seen.
- Drivers should “rock” their upper body while looking and take more time searching – allowing the motorcyclist to “appear” if driver’s vision is blocked. Drivers must understand the need to look around pillars and roadside obstacles.

### 3. LOOKED, MOTORCYCLIST VISIBLE, BUT DIDN'T SEE

The driver looks, the motorcyclist is visible, but the driver never becomes aware of the motorcyclist. This is called inattentional blindness. There are several explanations for this phenomenon.

The long-standing explanation is that the motorcyclist is small and inconspicuous. Recent research indicates that lack of conspicuity doesn’t explain many LBFTS ROWV crashes—drivers pull out in front of highly conspicuous trains and emergency vehicles.

Motorcyclists are a small fraction of road users—there are not many motorcyclists on the road compared to other vehicles and most road users don’t own or operate a motorcycle and have little connection to motorcycling. People tend to “see” (perceive or become aware of) things within their visual field that they expect to see and/or that have meaning to them, e.g., antique car lovers can spot vintage cars in the traffic mix even though there are few on the road.

Saccade masking is another phenomenon about the way our eyes work that could account for when drivers look, the motorcyclist is visible but the driver does not “see” the motorcyclist.

When we move our head and eyes quickly to scan a scene, the background moves rapidly through our zone of vision.

Drivers (and riders) on average look in each direction for less than a half second before turning their head to look in the other direction. When we turn our heads quickly, our vision is shut down in a series of saccades. Without saccades, our rapid head and eye movement would cause disorientation and dizziness. Our eyes don’t move smoothly across the background, as we commonly think. Instead our eyes move very rapidly from one selected fixation point to another.

This is known as saccadic masking or saccadic suppression and works very effectively for processing complex scenes, but there is a drawback. The brain ceases to process retinal images between saccades. It is only during the stationary fixations that an image is processed. The consequence is all drivers and riders are left with gaps in visual perception whenever we quickly scan both ways at an intersection. The brain “fills in” the missing visual data, giving us the impression of continuous vision during the scan. We believe we have completed a full continuous scan, but the truth is our scan is more like a series of snapshots which, without our awareness, our brain has stitched together. Even an attentive driver looking in both directions to check for oncoming traffic may fail to see an approaching motorcyclist if he/she falls within a saccade.

- Research does indicate that riders can benefit from making themselves more conspicuous (visible). Riders should strongly consider wearing Hi-Viz gear and adding auxiliary lights.
- Drivers need to make (force) their brain to perceive road users that might be relatively rare in the traffic mix or have little meaning to the driver. Motorcyclists are vulnerable road users that fit this category. Drivers should look near,

**Four Chances** *Continued on page 5 >*

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## Four Chances *Continued from page 4 >*

middle-distance, and far-distance while asking themselves—is there a pedestrian, bicyclist, or motorcyclist approaching? Taking more time to move our head and keeping our eyes moving in lock-step with our head will lessen the chance a motorcyclist will be lost in a saccade.

The left turn scenario presents another problem—motion camouflage. Many motorcyclists ride in the left third of their lane. This position is often recommended as the best position for seeing and being seen. However, a motorcyclist riding in the left third of the lane and approaching a stopped car waiting to turn left is placed directly in front (straight ahead) of the driver. The motorcyclist is moving toward the car but from the driver's perspective the motorcyclist appears stationary because the motorcyclist remains on the same line of travel between the driver and a landmark point behind the motorcyclist. The motorcyclist can appear to remain at a far distance until the last moment.

- In this position, the view from the driver to the motorcyclist is at an angle which presents a changing background and results in the perception of movement.
- The car driver, waiting to turn, looking ahead, and aware of this phenomenon can increase their chance of seeing a motorcyclist traveling directly at them by rocking their upper body side-to-side while looking. The rocking will remind them they are searching for hard-to-see motorcyclists and at the same time change their line of vision, creating the same result as the motorcyclist can create by changing lane position.

## 4. LOOKED, SAW BUT MISCALCULATED

The driver looks, the motorcyclist is visible, the driver sees the motorcyclist but fails to correctly judge the speed and distance of the motorcyclist. The research indicates that motorcyclists' approach speed toward

intersections is often higher than that of other vehicles.

The phenomenon termed size-arrival effect is in play in this scenario. Our mind



judges larger objects to be closer to collision than smaller objects, even if the larger object is farther away. Because motorcycles (and their riders) are small compared to other vehicles on the road, drivers may judge them as being farther away (longer time to arrive) than they actually are.

- Riders have the responsibility to slow down and approach intersections with caution and readiness to brake.
- To compensate for the size-arrival effect, drivers should assume the motorcyclist they see will arrive at the collision point sooner than they think—and choose to wait. Choosing to wait will cost a few seconds in time. Misjudging the motorcyclist's arrival and turning across his/her path causing a collision could result in a horrific catastrophe.

## SUMMARY

Blocked vision, inattentive blindness, saccadic masking, motorcyclist speeding, motion camouflage, and size-arrival effect all come together at intersections (including informal intersections, such as driveways) to create a perfect storm that can result in a tragic crash. Riders and drivers need to understand these phenomena. Both can lessen the chances of a disastrous result.

- For the rider, Hi-Viz gear, auxiliary lights, slowing down and making

informed choices about positioning are the main measures to take.

- For drivers, looking to specific distances, rocking (side-to-side or back and forth) while looking, thinking about vulnerable road users by asking yourself if a pedestrian, bicyclist, or motorcyclist is approaching, and assuming a motorcyclist will arrive quicker than you expect are actions to take to reduce the chance of a crash.

\*Four Chances for Error is a concept from *The Science of Being Seen* by Kevin Williams <https://scienceofbeingseen.wordpress.com/>

## PAAM *Continued from page 4 >*

Vehicle Enforcement Division out of the Seventh District, which is based in Gaylord. He says early in the pandemic speeds among commercial motor vehicles were up. He was seeing a lot of trucks going 70 miles per hour in 55-mile-per-hour zones, which he says he rarely saw before. Keller says fatal crashes involving commercial motor vehicles were also up this year in his district, but it's important to note that none of these were the truck driver's fault.

As law enforcement adapts around our state to deal with traffic stops during the pandemic, it's important that traffic enforcement continues to be a priority in our state. Dangerous driving conditions such as impaired driving and other reckless driving behaviors on our roads continue during good and bad times. We, therefore, owe it to Michigan citizens to keep our roads safe at all times.



# SAFETY Network

## Don't veer for deer

As summer comes to an end, we prepare to enter a new season. Deer season. October means the start of the archery deer hunting season and we start to see a huge increase in the number of vehicle-deer crashes. There are approximately 50,000 vehicle-deer crashes each year in Michigan, with more than 40 percent of those crashes coming in October, November, and December. And on average, about 13 people are killed every year in vehicle-deer crashes, a majority of those killed are motorcyclists.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Stay aware, alert, and sober.
- Seat belts are your best defense in any collision.
- Watch for deer crossing signs.

- Deer frequently travel in groups. If you see one deer, slow down. Chances are there are others nearby.
- Be especially alert for deer at dawn and dusk, when they are more active.
- Don't rely on gimmicks like flashing your high-beam headlights or honking your horn.

### IF A CRASH IS UNAVOIDABLE

- Don't swerve.
- Brake firmly.
- Hold onto the steering wheel.
- Stay in your lane.
- Bring your vehicle to a controlled stop.

### MOTORCYCLISTS

- Be alert for deer whenever you ride. Deer crashes happen in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

- Slow down. Decreasing speed gives a motorcyclist more time to spot an animal and react.
- Cover the brakes to reduce reaction time.
- Use high-beam headlights and additional driving lights, when possible.
- If riding in a group, spread out riders in a staggered formation. If one rider hits a deer, this will lessen the chance that other riders will be involved.
- Wear protective gear at all times.



School looks different for many this year, but school buses look the same. To order the *School Buses are Like Traffic Signals* flyer, or any OHSP brochure, visit [www.Michigan.gov/OHSPcatalog](http://www.Michigan.gov/OHSPcatalog).

## Always be ready

September is National Preparedness Month. If you have an emergency kit in your vehicle, this would be a great time to go through each item and make sure they are still in working order. If you do not have an emergency kit in your vehicle, you can put

together a simple one quickly. Don't wait until it's too late to wish you had one. A vehicle emergency kit should include: blankets, water, batteries, chargers, first aid kit, jumper cables, shovel, matches, and a flashlight.



# SAFETY Network

## STAFF PROFILE

### Kara Rueckert

OCCUPANT PROTECTION PROGRAM COORDINATOR/ACTING SENIOR EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANT



Kara has been with the OHSP for more than six years and with the State of Michigan for nearly seven years. She was recently promoted to the occupant protection program coordinator position, and with the current hiring freeze, is still acting as the senior executive management assistant. Kara and her husband, Jeremy, have two sons, Cooper (two and a half years old) and Tucker (one and a half years old) and a dog named Shelby (three and a half years old in human years).

#### What do you like most about your job?

*When I interviewed for the administrative assistant position with our office, I was asked what I was looking forward to most about the job. My response was simple: I wanted to learn as much as I could about the office and help make everyone else's job easier at the same*

*time. That desire has not changed and to this day, I strive to learn more about other programs and initiatives while still doing what I can to take some of the workload off others. I truly believe that working together is the only way to achieve our mission to save lives and reduce injuries on Michigan roads.*

#### What are you most proud of at work?

*Going right along with the previous question, I am proud of myself for continuing to learn, grow, and develop my skills and knowledge to be able to move forward with our office. OHSP has felt like home since I got here. I'm now in my third position at OHSP and I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to work on my own program and advance my career. I have always had bigger plans for myself career-wise and I am thankful my work ethic and drive have allowed me to continue moving forward to achieve my goals, while still being able to help others do the same.*

#### What are your interests or hobbies?

*Having two boys that are less than a year apart and both under the age of three, I'd have to say I am a walking billboard for those T-shirts that say, "mom of boys." Each day is a new adventure and I am learning to love all the stereotypical 'boy' things—dinosaurs, trucks, tractors—and Coop and Tuck are teaching me all the noises those things make! Our family loves to be outside; camping and kayaking are two of our favorite pastimes during the summer and fall months.*

#### What personal achievement are you most proud of?

*Broken record here: my family. I've always said I was born to be a mom and my boys are proof that's true. Those two know how loved and safe they are with us as parents and it is truly a blessing to be able to teach them, watch them grow, and to just be a part of their everyday experiences. Completing my master's program while working, planning a wedding, and then being pregnant is up there, too, but those two will always be at the top of that list!*

#### What's your favorite vacation spot?

*To be honest, I don't have one spot that I would consider a favorite. Before children, my husband and I went on some amazing trips—Australia, Costa Rica, the Caribbean—all beautiful, fun places we'd love to visit again when the boys are older. With young ones, though, we now have a fifth wheel camper that we use as often as possible to visit new places. Each time we go somewhere, we get to experience a new surrounding with the comforts of home and we absolutely love exploring!*

#### What's something people don't know about you?

*I am a pretty open book, but some people may not know that I grew up in Orlando, Florida. While I have always been a Michigander at heart and was actually born in Lansing, I moved to Florida with my family when I was nine and didn't move back until 2010. I completed my undergrad at the University of Central Florida in elementary education before moving back to my hometown a week after graduation.*