



Safety NETS

FALL/WINTER 2004

Information to help keep your employees safe on the road

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MINNESOTA NETWORK OF EMPLOYERS FOR TRAFFIC SAFETY

Winter Wonderland



The most dangerous thing your employees do is drive to and from work. Traffic crashes are the number one cause of worker deaths. On and off the job, traffic crashes resulted in 3 million lost workdays in 2000 (most current data).

Minnesota's winters add a special list of hazards to that daily commute. On top of the ice and snow, the prevalence of impaired drivers—those under the influence of drugs and alcohol—make our long winter season particularly daunting. In a survey taken in 2000, almost 4 percent of Minnesotan adults reported that they had driven after drinking too much at least once in the past month. Alcohol was a factor in 39 percent of Minnesota traffic fatalities in 2003. Alcohol-related deaths declined in 28 states last year, but not in Minnesota. Here, the rate jumped 4.3 percent.

An ounce of prevention can keep your employees safe and focused on their jobs, and help contain your health care and workers' comp costs. Consider the following resources:

"Last Call": Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety

"Last Call," a powerful impaired driving training module for businesses, unions and other organizations, educates employees about the consequences of and alternatives to driving drunk. A hard-hitting, 18-minute video chronicles Minnesotans whose lives have been impacted by impaired driving.

The "Last Call" program specifically targets the 21- to 34-year-old blue-collar workforce - a group disproportionately represented in Minnesota traffic fatalities. Learn more about this program, and order it, at <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/ots/LastCall/default.asp>.

NETS helps drive the message home

The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) assembles some of the country's most popular and effective support materials for traffic safety programs. Check out the NETS store at <http://www.trafficsafety.org/products.asp> or the Minnesota NETS site at <http://www.mnsafetycouncil.org/nets/N-res.cfm> for CDs, posters, brochures, payroll stuffers, incentives and more. The Minnesota NETS site offers free payroll stuffers: "A Few Drinks Is All It Takes to Have Your Friends in Stitches" (lists 15 ways to say "no" to alcohol), and "Driving Under the Influence Can Blemish More Than Your Record" (three ways to prevent friends from drinking and driving). You'll also find fact sheets about winter driving and impaired driving, linked from <http://www.mnsafetycouncil.org/nets/N-info.cfm>.

For information about winter travel survival kits, or how to purchase one, contact Lisa Kons, Minnesota NETS, at 651-228-7330/800-444-9150; e-mail: kons@mnsafetycouncil.org.

Employers: *The next page of the NETS newsletter is designed as an employee hand-out. Feel free to copy and distribute.*



Winter Traffic Safety Tips



Prepare

- Maintain your car: Check battery and tire tread, keep your windows clear, put no-freeze fluid in the washer reservoir, check your antifreeze.
- Have on hand: flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material (sand, kitty litter, even floor mats), shovel, snow brush and ice scraper, warning devices (like flares) and blankets. For long trips, add food (energy bars) and water, medication and cell phone.
- Stopped or stalled? Stay with your car, don't overexert, put bright markers on antenna or windows and shine dome light, and, if you run your car, clear exhaust pipe and run it just enough to stay warm.
- Plan your route. Allow plenty of time (check the weather and leave early if necessary), be familiar with the maps/directions, and let others know your route and arrival time.
- Practice cold weather driving! During daylight, practice slowly on the ice or snow in an empty lot. Steer into a skid. Know what your brakes will do: stomp on antilock brakes, pump non-antilock brakes. Remember that stopping distances are longer on water-covered ice and ice. Don't idle for a long time with the windows up or in an enclosed space.

Protect yourself

- Buckle up and sit back 10 inches from an air bag.
- Use child safety seats properly. Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag. Children who have outgrown a child safety seat should ride in a booster seat until the adult belts fit them properly (typically 4' 9" and 80 pounds). Children 12 and under are much safer in the back seat.

Prevent crashes

- Slow down and increase distances between cars.
- Focus on driving: be alert to road conditions and other vehicles.
- Avoid fatigue. Get plenty of rest before the trip, stop at least every three hours, and rotate drivers if possible.

Drunk Driving

Every 30 minutes someone dies in an alcohol-related crash. Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes killed nearly 17,000 people in the U.S. in 2002 alone (latest figures available). Alcohol is a factor in 6% of all traffic crashes, and over 40% of all fatal crashes. In Minnesota, 39% of traffic deaths in 2003 were alcohol-related.

Drunk Driving Quiz

- 1) What's stronger: A mixed drink, a beer, or a glass of wine?
- 2) Alcohol affects four of the abilities we need most while driving. What are those four?
- 3) At what blood alcohol level does impairment begin?



Answers

- 1) All three have about the same amount of alcohol. Figure it out!
Beer: 12 ounces at 5% alcohol = 0.6 (six tenths) ounce alcohol
Wine: 5 ounces at 12% alcohol = 0.6 ounce alcohol
Whiskey, vodka, gin, etc.: 1.5 ounces (a "shot") at 40% alcohol = 0.6 ounce alcohol
- 2) **Judgment** (we can misjudge speed, distance, our skill, other traffic and the need to wear a safety belt)
Alertness (reduced awareness of weather, traffic and road conditions; other traffic; things going on around us)
Vision (unable to perceive hazards quickly enough to prevent a collision)
Reaction time (increased reaction time means it takes us longer to stop)
- 3) All of these effects begin with our first drink. Alcohol doesn't sneak up and hit us on the head at .10. One drink makes us a less capable driver than no drinks!

