

Safety NETS

FALL 2003

Information to help keep your employees safe on the road

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

Drive Safely Work Week, October 6–10, 2003



Safe Driving is Everyone's Business. Do Your Part.

While driving for work do you struggle to navigate clogged highways, and inch through jam-packed intersections, or do you cruise along scenic two-lane rural roads? Regardless of the roads you're traveling, you are undoubtedly encountering ever-increasing fender benders from hurried motorists and experiencing disabled vehicles blocking roadways, causing unplanned waits and travel delays.

In a recent survey, 95 percent of Americans said that over the past three years, the traffic they encountered during their daily travels has gotten worse or they reported having seen no improvement to the already congested roadways.*

In 2001, commuters spent over 550 million hours per week in their cars and that number is on the rise. One out of three crashes and one out of five fatalities happen in congestion caused by a previous crash. While it is obvious that traffic congestion costs us time, what is less obvious, but still very real, is the cost in traffic deaths and injuries. Bottlenecks aren't just a nuisance; the lack of adequate capacity on our roadways actually causes traffic crashes that injures or kill drivers and their passengers. As more vehicles travel on roadways, speeds and spacing between vehicles are reduced. The time needed for drivers to react is significantly shortened, increasing driver frustration. Dangerous driver actions become more common and the potential for crashes increases.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), drivers must face the hard truth: at least half of the congestion we encounter is our own fault. We run out of gas. We butt into merge lines. We miss our exit ramp and slam into each other. When trouble strikes someone else, we slow down to gawk. Traffic engineers call the ensuing backups "nonrecurring" congestion. These are the delays that frustrate people the most, the kind that no amount of careful planning can contain. The good news is that we can all do our part to make roadways less congested and more reliable simply by driving more carefully, knowing our route, and taking better care of our vehicles.

The goal of Drive Safely Work Week, a workplace traffic safety campaign sponsored by the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, is to emphasize the importance of driving safely on and off the job to eliminate preventable crashes. This year's campaign focuses on the positive actions that each driver can take to ensure their safety and the safety of others sharing the road as they drive for work or commute to and from work.

**April 2003 survey, AAA and the American Public Transportation Association*

Source: Network of Employers for Traffic Safety

Find more on MO (Members Only) Log on to the "Members Only" section of our Web site for statistics on the main causes of congestion.

Looking for Drive Safely Work Week resources? Contact Lisa at 651-228-7330/800-444-9150 for the Drive Safely Work Week planner/toolkit. The \$30 kit contains a "how to" guide; fact sheets; descriptions of activities to reinforce the campaign; camera-ready payroll stuffers, cartoons, activity sheets, and graphics; a poster; and newsletter article—all in hard copy and on CD-ROM—and a resource guide.

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The Roadway

The roadway is generally recognized as the second most common factor causing crashes. Roadway design, roadside hazards and roadway conditions are all contributing factors to these events. Driving safely on our roadways can be a demanding task requiring a motorist's constant attention. Knowing the route and being well informed about weather and road conditions as well as unusual traffic activity ahead: crashes, road closures, work zones, or heavier than usual congestion helps drivers to head off traffic nightmares before they materialize.

Do Your Part: Drive Carefully and Share the Road with Others

- Obtain information on the latest tie-ups, traffic jams, roadway conditions and visibility before you get behind the wheel. Then you can plan your route to avoid some delays or allow yourself extra drive time. Whether it's drive time radio, TV or the Internet, keep yourself informed to make educated decisions about travel times, routes, etc. The National Traffic and Road Closure Information web site at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficinfo/index.htm> has links to web sites with information on construction, road, weather and travel conditions.
- Plan your route ahead of time. Getting lost is embarrassing, frustrating and exasperating, but knowing where you're going ahead of time can reduce your stress and ensure that you arrive safely and on time. Keep a current map with you or use an Internet mapping site, they're fast and easy, but not always accurate. Best advice: Print out maps from at least 2 sites and compare them.
- Being fully prepared also includes knowing the meaning of and obeying road signs, signals and pavement markings. Because we have to be more generous these days in sharing space with our fellow

travelers, knowing the rules of the road and learning to read the language of the road signs, signals and markings is more important than ever before.

- Be aware of locations where bottlenecks will develop: the narrowing of a roadway into fewer lanes, at toll-booths, entrance and exit ramps, and at bridge rails or medians with close side clearances. Particularly troublesome are "weaving areas" where vehicles must cross several lanes to get to and from entry and exit points.
- Be aware of the roadway hazards that create additional stress for drivers who are already dealing with a difficult driving situation. Trees, utility poles close to the road, sharp curves, work zones, and narrow lanes with no shoulders are hazards that vehicles can crash into if they leave the roadway. Take extra care when driving through these areas or avoid them altogether.

Source: *Network of Employers for Traffic Safety*

Did you know that over the past 30 years in the US:

- Population increased 30%
- Number of licensed vehicles increased 87%
- Vehicle miles traveled increased 130%
- New highway capacity increased only 5%

SOURCE: *American Road & Transportation Builders Association*

Did you know that in 2001:

- Over 42,500 miles of highways were congested
- Over 6,000 of these miles were in rural areas
- Rural roads handled 40% of all travel
- 60% of fatalities occurred on rural roads

SOURCE: *Federal Highway Administration*

