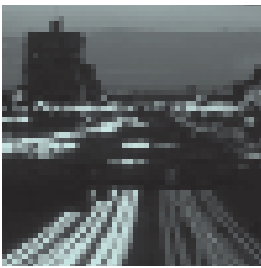


## Traffic Safety Update



NOTE: The second page of this newsletter is designed to be used as a handout for your employees.

### Minnesota Crash Report, September 2006

According to preliminary traffic crash reports from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS), 17 people were killed and 129 were seriously injured on state roads in September. Since January, the state has recorded 350 traffic deaths — compared to 392 deaths at this time last year. While fatal traffic crashes have decreased overall by more than 10 percent, year-to-date motorcycle crash fatalities have increased by nearly 37 percent.

The September deaths include 12 vehicle occupants, three motorcyclists and two pedestrians. Of the vehicle occupants killed, seven were not wearing seat belts. Alcohol-related crashes resulted in at least 30 of the serious injuries; alcohol use in fatality crashes is unknown at this time. September traffic death totals will increase as additional reports are submitted.

### New Study: Vehicles, Not Drivers, Becoming Safer

The declining traffic death rate in the U.S. is the result of vehicle design improvements, not safer driver behavior or roadway design, according to a new study from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Researchers separated vehicle effects from other effects on motor vehicle death rates during 1985-2004 by estimating what the death rate trend would have been if vehicle designs hadn't changed over the years — that is, if people still were driving the kinds of vehicles they drove in 1985. Without improvements that have offered increased protection for occupants, the motor vehicle death rate per registered vehicle would have

stopped declining in 1994 and started going up.

The IIHS concluded that an increasingly dangerous traffic environment resulted when efforts to mandate belt use and toughen DWI laws diminished in the 1990s at the same time that states were raising speed limits. In response to the study, a spokesman for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) acknowledged the importance of safety improvements in vehicles, but also credited increased seat belt use with helping to reduce death rates.



### Does Your Community Have Cable?

Cable highway median barriers, that is. A recent article in *USA Today* touted the “phenomenally effective” lower-cost device as superior to steel-beam or concrete median barriers because of its ability to stretch and prevent cars from rebounding into traffic. That flexibility also reduces the G-forces experienced by a driver or other occupant.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation has installed about 600 miles of cable since 1998 and has seen median crossover fatality rates drop 75 percent. MNDOT will invest \$3 million in the cable barriers over the next two years on high speed divided roads in the Twin Cities metro area and other high traffic areas.

## Safe Driving is Your Responsibility. Make the Commitment.

Driving is an everyday activity — but it's a serious responsibility and deserves your full, undivided attention. Getting to your destination and back safely should be your number one priority. By following the **10 Steps to Responsible Driving™**, you can map out a strategy to avoid road trouble and ensure that every trip is as safe and worry-free as possible:

- Even if you know that you're a safe driver, give these steps some thought. Informed drivers make better decisions that keep roads safer.
- Regular maintenance will prevent a breakdown and knowing where you're headed will save you time and frustration.
- Plenty of distractions, both inside and outside your vehicle can take your attention away from the road. Chatty fellow travelers, traffic tie-ups, road construction, ringing cell phones, and unfamiliar roads are just a few disruptions you might encounter. While you can expect distractions, you can also counter them with safe driving practices to keep you alert and focused.

### 10 Steps to Responsible Driving™

1. Plan your route
2. Maintain your vehicle
3. Focus your attention
4. Minimize your distractions
5. Know your surroundings
6. Share your space
7. Watch your speed
8. Keep your distance
9. Signal your intentions
10. Always wear your seat belt

- Along with being attentive, make sure everyone in your vehicle is buckled up properly at all times. In fact, buckling up is one of the single most effective things you can do to keep yourself and your passengers safe while on the road.
- Be aware of your risk when driving. One of every five drivers is involved in a traffic crash each year. Most of these incidents could have been prevented. Since you cannot control the actions of the other drivers on the road you have to rely on our own driving skills, knowledge, and experience. Safe driving is up to you.
- Be fully prepared when you get behind the wheel. You will improve your odds of always arriving at your destination safely.

### Do You Know Your Risk?

Every 5 seconds a crash occurs.

Every 7 seconds a property damage crash occurs.

Every 10 seconds there is a traffic-related injury.

Every 12 minutes in the United States, someone dies in a traffic crash.