

## Drive Safely Work Week, October 5 – 9, 2009

### *Drive focused. Drive smart. Get home safely.*



Drive Safely Work Week, coordinated by the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), is an annual workplace safety campaign. It provides an

opportunity to remind employees of safe driving practices. Many businesses today are operating with the bare minimum staff needed to get the job done – no one can afford the disruption of a traffic-related injury to even one employee.

This year's campaign addresses distracted driving and eco-friendly driving, and emphasizes that most everyone has someone counting on them to get home safely every day. Although the campaign is officially held October 5 – 9, you can continue to stress the campaign's safety messages within your organization throughout the year to make driving safely a part of every trip, every day, on and off the job. Because regardless of a person's job title, getting home safely is the most important thing anyone will do today. Links to resources are available at [www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/nets](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/nets).

*Drive focused.* Distracted driving is the presence of anything that can distract a driver's physical and mental attention from driving. Consider these facts:

- Nearly 80% of crashes and 65% of near crashes involve some form of driver inattention within three seconds preceding the event.

- A recent poll conducted by Nationwide Insurance indicated 98% of people feel they are safe drivers, yet nearly three-quarters report that they perform other tasks while driving.
- It is estimated that a driver makes an average of 20 major decisions during every mile of driving.
- Recent simulator studies have shown that drivers on cell phones look but fail to see up to 50% of the information in the driving environment. The same studies have indicated there is no difference in the cognitive distraction between drivers using hand-held and hands-free devices.
- Although they tend to increase their following distance, drivers on cell phones have more rear-end crashes than drunk drivers.
- Text messaging continues to set usage records, according to the industry trade group. In a recent MSNBC poll, 32% of respondents admitted to texting while driving. Texting while driving is illegal in Minnesota.

*Drive smart.* Smart driving is driving safely, but it's also driving in an eco-friendly manner, adjusting the way we drive to reduce the impact of our driving on the environment. It involves speed, how we start and stop, load levels, tire inflation, oil changes, tightening the gas cap, car pooling and more. If just half of all drivers nationwide practiced moderate levels of eco-friendly driving, annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could be reduced by about 100 million tons, or the equivalent of heating and powering 8.5 million households.

### Just Released: Minnesota Crash Facts, 2008

- 79,095 crashes reported
- 192,235 people involved in those crashes
- 455 people died; 33,379 were injured
- Estimated economic cost to Minnesota: \$1,480,371,300
- Alcohol-involved crashes killed 163 people and resulted in 2,896 injuries; estimated cost: \$261,017,800
- Seat belt use: 87 percent. Minnesota law requires every body in every seat to buckle up.

NOTE: The information about distracted driving on the next page can be copied and posted or distributed to your employees.



## Drive focused. Drive smart. Get home safely.

### Tips to Manage Potential Distractions

**Ease the Pressure.** If you're expecting an important call while driving, program your phone with a unique ring from that number, signaling you to safely pull over to take the call. Consider allowing all other calls to go to voicemail.

**Increase your following distance.** Driver training experts suggest a following distance of 4 seconds. The 4-second following rule increases visibility and gives more time to react to what's happening in front of you, thus reducing the risk to you and your passengers.

**Take control.** On your personal vehicle, pre-set the climate control, radio and CD player. If driving an unfamiliar vehicle, take the time to identify the location of signals, wipers and lights.

**Have a flight plan.** Don't wait until you are driving to plan your route. Access mapping tools such as MapQuest or Google Maps before you leave, or take advantage of services such as OnStar Turn-by-Turn Navigation (if available on your vehicle) or other Global Positioning Systems or services.

**Buckle it up.** Be sure to properly secure all cargo you may be transporting including pets. And buckle yourself in on every trip. It's your best defense against the distracted drivers sharing the road with you – and it's the law.

**Let it begin with ME.** Make it a practice when you make a call to someone's cell phone to ask if they are driving. If the response is "yes," take it upon yourself to call them back later or ask them to return your call when they have reached their

destination. If everyone did this, it would greatly reduce the number of distracted drivers sharing the roads with us.

**Look at the big picture.** Making or receiving a phone call while driving makes you four times more likely to be involved in a traffic crash, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Take a moment to focus on those who are counting on you to get home safely every day before you make a choice to divert your full attention from the road.

**Give your tunes a tune-up.** Digital music devices (iPods, mp3 players) can pose a major distraction. Pre-set a driving playlist to provide continuous tunes without the need for adjustments. Also, it is dangerous and typically illegal to drive with headphones. Only use your device if it can be played over your vehicle's speakers.

**Texting and driving don't mix.** There is no way to safely drive while texting – and that's why it's against the law in Minnesota. Texting that begins at a stoplight typically carries over to when traffic is moving again. Even if you are proficient enough that you don't take your eyes off the road, your mind is off the road and your hands are off the wheel. **JUST DON'T DO IT!**

