

Summer Driving Made Riskier by Surging Speeds

“Clear dry roads are conducive to high speeds; consequently, fatal crashes have a pronounced seasonal variation, peaking in the warm summer months and falling in the winter months.”

- *Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts, 2004,*
Minnesota Department of Public Safety,
Office of Traffic Safety

Driving is one of the biggest risks your employees face, both on and off the job. In the summer, speed emerges as a particular hazard. Each year in Minnesota, speed is a factor in about 150 deaths and 7,000 injuries. Speed is the contributing factor cited most frequently by law enforcement in fatal single vehicle crashes, and it's a significant factor, particularly for drivers under age 65, in all crashes. Consider these facts:

- From 2001 - 2005, illegal or unsafe speed was a contributing factor in 768 fatal crashes, resulting in 850 deaths. Those deaths cost Minnesota over \$914 million.
- Speeding and driving impaired are often linked. From 2000 - 2004, illegal or unsafe speed was cited in 57 percent of all alcohol-related crashes.
- Research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that motorists wrongly believe speeding is not a great risk to safety or as serious as other traffic violations. In reality, the consequences of speeding include:
 - greater potential for loss of control of the vehicle
 - increased stopping distance
 - increased crash severity, leading to more numerous and severe injuries.



Last fall, state law enforcement agencies launched the federally-funded HEAT (highway enforcement of aggressive traffic) campaign to strictly enforce speed limits. Statewide the first nine months of HEAT yielded 62,077 vehicle stops, 23,660 speed citations, nearly 33,000 speed warnings and 10,287 citations for various offenses related to DWI, outstanding warrants, drugs, no insurance, illegal substance/open

bottle, unbelted occupants and equipment. High speed travel continued to drop on roads where speed limits had been increased from 55 mph to 60 mph. In the metro area, the number of vehicles traveling over 70 mph has dropped almost 25 percent based on data from Highways 100, I-94 and I-35W.

How can you raise employees' awareness of the dangers of speed? Post or copy and hand out the flip side of this page (also available as a free payroll stuffer, which you can order from our Web site: <http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/nets/N->

[res.cfm?L1=85&L2=291](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/nets/N-res.cfm?L1=85&L2=291)). You'll find additional resources on the Minnesota NETS site at <http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/nets>.

Also recommended, “Focus on Safety — Cool Tips for a Safe Summer Trip” from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). It includes a pre-trip vehicle checklist, suggestions about what to take and tips for staying focused when on the road. See http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/Seasonal_Advisories/SummerDrivingTips2006/index.htm.



Gain a Second. Lose a Lifetime.

Ah, summer in Minnesota. The roads are dry and clear — and deadly. Fatal crashes peak in Minnesota during the summer months, with speed a big factor, particularly among young drivers.

How does speed affect the outcome of a crash? Driving at high speeds increases the force of impact if a collision occurs. You have a 50/50 chance of surviving a crash at a speed of 55 miles per hour. At 70 mph the odds are 30 to 1 that you won't make it. Speed also reduces the amount of time you have to react. Even at 30 mph you will travel 33 feet from the time you see a hazard until you get your foot on the brake.

Know your limits

The speeds posted on Minnesota roads apply in ideal driving conditions only. Bad weather or other hazards may reduce the speed for safe driving and increase your stopping distance. Minnesota law says you must never drive a vehicle at a speed that is faster than reasonable under existing conditions. In other words, think of speeding as going too fast to stop in the distance needed to avoid a crash.

Think about it. The small amount of time you'll save speeding could cost you an arm and a leg, or worse.

Cool Tips for a Safe Summer Trip

Getting there is half the fun of a road trip vacation. It's also half the hassle. Plenty of distractions both inside and outside your vehicle can take your attention from the road. Cranky fellow travelers, traffic congestion, road construction and detours, ringing cell phones, unfamiliar roads, and loud music are just a few you might encounter. While you can expect some distractions, you can also counter them with safe driving techniques to help you keep your focus.

Tips for Staying Focused

The best way to stay focused while driving is to avoid fatigue. Stopping for food or beverages, taking time to pull over at a rest stop just to stretch your legs, staying overnight at a motel or local bed and breakfast, and sharing the driving are all good strategies for avoiding fatigue and staying alert behind the wheel.

Traveling with Children

Remember that long trips can be especially tough on children. Stopping along the way makes the trip easier and less tiring for them as well — and more of an adventure too! Also, bring along a few favorite books or soft toys to keep the little ones content and occupied.

Buckle Up Minnesota. Every Trip. Every Time.

Along with staying focused, make sure everyone in your vehicle is buckled up properly at all times. Buckling up is the single most effective thing you can do to keep yourself and your passengers safe while on the road.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration