

# Safety NETS

FALL/WINTER 2002

Information to help keep your employees safe on the road

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

## Winter Driving and Survival Tips

**D**rivers, beware—old man winter is just around the corner! In addition to the basic safe driving habits we practice all year long—buckling up, driving alert and sober, and driving at a safe and legal speed—there are special precautions that need to be followed during the winter months.

Make sure your car is ready for the season. Have it serviced by a qualified mechanic and be sure that the brakes, battery, exhaust and cooling systems, headlights, fluids, windshield wipers and washers are all in proper working order. Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze. Keep close tabs on the weather. Avoid traveling, especially alone, if severe weather is in the forecast. Before taking a trip, inform someone at your destination of your expected arrival time and your travel route.

Stock your car with basic winter driving equipment: a scraper and brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain and a bag of sand or cat litter for traction. Include emergency items such as road flares, a blanket, and a flashlight with batteries. Keep an emergency survival kit in the car. It should include:

- a metal bucket or coffee can, candle stubs and matches that can be used to melt snow for drinking water
- a brightly colored square of cloth such as a bandanna to tie to your vehicle's antenna
- small first aid kit
- a large plastic garbage bag to insulate your feet, legs and torso
- snack foods for energy, such as candy bars.

If your car has been outside during a snowfall, brush all the snow off before setting out. Snow left on the front hood will blow into the front

vent and cause defrosting problems, and can also melt and re-freeze on the windshield. Snow on the roof will cover the rear window and snow on the rear deck will blow onto tail lights. Pay particular attention to cleaning off headlights and tail lights so that other motorists can see you.

Adjust your speed to the conditions and increase following distances. Remember that bridges and overpasses can be more slippery than other parts of the road. If you begin to skid, remain calm, ease your foot off the gas and turn the wheel in the direction you want the car to go. If your vehicle is equipped with an anti-lock braking system (ABS) apply a steady firm pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump ABS brakes. Steady pressure on the brake pedal activates an electronic sensor in the system that detects an impending wheel lock condition. ABS makes it easier to stop the car in a shorter distance and provides improved stability and steering when braking, especially on wet roads.

If even after following all precautions you find yourself stranded, stay calm and stay put. Your chances of being rescued are greater if you remain in one place. Staying in your car will decrease your risk of frostbite or hypothermia. Run your engine for heat about once an hour (every half hour in extreme cold). Make sure your exhaust pipe is clear to prevent the back up of carbon monoxide. Leave one window slightly open. Tie a piece of brightly colored cloth to your antenna to alert others and aid rescuers. Consider keeping a cellular phone for use during emergencies. Because driving requires your full attention, find a safe place to pull over when you need to make a call.

# December: Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

## Face the facts, choose safer solutions

### The Problem

- Alcohol-impaired driving accounted for an estimated 40% of fatal crashes in 2001, resulting in 16,652 deaths nationwide (NHTSA). In Minnesota, 37% of fatal crashes were alcohol-related in 2001.
- About three in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.
- Research shows that alcohol is a contributing factor in 39% of all work-related traffic crashes.
- Nearly 1.5 million people are arrested each year for driving while intoxicated (DWI). Two-thirds of all drivers arrested for DWI are first time offenders.
- A DWI/DUI conviction on a person's driving record may prevent them from getting a job or promotion, or may even result in job loss.
- Nine out of 10 insurance companies automatically



cancel a driver convicted of a DWI/DUI violation. Consequently, the driver must find a high-risk insurance company with substantial rate increases.

- Alcohol involvement is highest at night (9 pm to 6 am), on weekends and on holidays.
- Driving skills, especially judgment, are impaired in most people long before they exhibit visible signs of drunkenness.

### Solutions

- Decide who is the designated driver before a party or evening out begins.
- Be the kind of co-worker who will take the keys if someone has had too much to drink.
- If you're impaired, make the safe choice—ride with a designated driver, call a taxi, stay where you are, or call a sober friend or family member. Making the safe choice could save your life.

## Can you spot an impaired driver on the road?

When you drive, protect yourself and passengers by being focused and on the lookout for impaired drivers. Drivers under the influence of alcohol often display certain characteristic driving behaviors:

- Weaving, swerving, drifting or straddling the center line
- Driving on the wrong side of the road
- Driving at a very slow speed
- Stopping without cause or braking erratically
- Turning abruptly or responding slowly to traffic signals
- Driving with the window down in cold weather
- Driving with headlights off at night

If you are in front of the impaired driver, turn right at the nearest intersection and let the driver pass you. If the driver is in front of you, stay a safe distance behind. And if the driver is coming at you, slow down, move to the right and stop. Alert the police that there is an impaired driver on the road.



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