

This is Road-Safe Workplace, an electronic newsletter about workplace traffic safety from the Vermont Department of Labor because the number one cause of death and injury in the workplace are traffic crashes. Road-Safe Workplace has been created to distribute statistics, facts, and other materials to help employers create, maintain and improve their workplace traffic safety programs. Please use this information in your company newsletters, bulletin boards, or employee e-mail memos. Your thoughts and comments are always welcome. However, if you do not wish to receive Road-Safe Workplace, please reply with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.



Vermont Highway Fatalities for 2008 were 73

*So Far in 2009: 55 Fatalities
Don't Let The Next One Be You!*

Vermont to Face Texting Problem

Vermont is poised to become one of the nearly 20 states that have banned texting while driving. A bill has been drafted for State Senator Vincent Illuzzi (R) Essex-Orleans that prohibits texting while driving in Vermont. The penalty for violating this provision would be \$500 plus two points on a person's driver's license. Senator Illuzzi described texting while driving as "one of the most dangerous things a person can do." Illuzzi predicted there would not be much resistance to his proposal based on conversations he has had with constituents and other lawmakers.

A bill that prohibits the use of hand-held electronic devices for all drivers is presently languishing in the Senate Rules Committee. H-147, which cleared the house last year by 60 votes, also changes Vermont's secondary seat belt law to a standard, or primary law. It is that provision which is opposed by the Senate leadership that prevents action on the bill. Senator

Illuzzi does not feel that opposition will stall his bill because it deals only with banning texting while driving.

Vermont State Police Corporal Robert Halpin said the State Police would also support the measure. According to Vermont State Police data there were 12 motor vehicle crashes that involved cell phones. Last year that number leaped to 31.



American Automobile Association Supports Texting Ban

The AAA recently announced that it will work to pass laws in all 50 states to prohibit text messaging by drivers by 2013. The organization said they will advocate for laws that make it illegal for drivers of all ages to send, write or read a text message or e-mail while their vehicle is in motion. The organization said multiple surveys of the general public and AAA's

membership show that 80 to 90 percent of Americans support texting bans.

Currently, 18 states and the District of Columbia have laws that address text messaging by all drivers. Two more states have laws that prohibit teens or other new drivers from texting while driving. AAA said they will

also continue their work through public education, driver training, and other safety programs to discourage motorists from engaging in the broad range of other distractions that tempt them while behind the wheel.

AAA officials say recent high-profile texting crashes and a provocative PSA from the United Kingdom have brought the dangers of distracted driving, and texting while driving in particular, into the public spotlight.

According to the wireless industry trade association, CTIA, the popularity of texting has mushroomed over the past four years. The number of monthly texting messages reached 110 billion at the end of 2008, a more than 11-fold increase in three years.

Studies have shown texting while driving to be an extremely dangerous distraction for drivers because of the extended time drivers spend not looking at the road.

Winter Weather Technology Proves Its Value

The **Vermont Agency of Transportation's** investment in winter weather technology is paying off for both highway crews and motorists traveling Vermont's highways. A series of camera and sensor towers have been erected along Interstate 89 and in other parts of Vermont to keep an electronic "eye" on the weather capturing data that keeps highway crews, travelers and motorists informed about road and weather conditions around the state.

The data which is sent to highway district offices, is also used to create special weather-related messages that posted on electronic message boards placed at strategic locations along the highways. A special website, www.511vt.com posts photos and data information of all road construction, closures, and weather conditions that is refreshed every five minutes. The website also contains information about atmospheric conditions as well as pavement conditions, such as pavement surface temperature, pavement surface freezing temperature and the type of precipitation on the road surface.

Viewers can also listen (24/7) to traveler information from VTrans two Low Power FM (LPFM) stations which are located in Randolph and Derby. Road weather data is also shared with the Lyndon State College Meteorology Department. In return LSC provides VTrans with accurate weather forecasts that VTrans Districts use to schedule proactive winter maintenance activities. There are ten camera/sensor recording towers: five along I-89 (Berlin, Bethel, Bolton, Brookfield and Williston), two on US-4 at Fair Haven and Mendon, one on US-7 at Brandon, one on Vermont Route 9 in Woodford and one at the Rutland Airport. An additional six RWIS sites will be implemented, all power by solar, this month.

Vermont businesses with drivers on the road will want to check www.511vt.com every day, or inform drivers of weather conditions along their intended route.

A Drug-Free Work Place

One of the most-often asked questions by management and rank & file in the workplace is "What Can I Do?" to help create and maintain a safe, healthy and drug-free workplace.

Most of us know someone; a family member, a friend or co-worker, who has been affected by alcohol or drug abuse in some way. Though some of the signs may vary by drug of choice, what you see that person doing and how you interact with him/her is often the same, regardless of the substance being used.

Both on and off the job, symptoms of alcohol or drug use may be physical (chills, smell of alcohol, sweating, weight loss, physical deterioration); emotional (increased aggression, anxiety, burnout, denial, depression, paranoia); and/or behavioral (excessive talking, impaired coordination, irritability, lack of energy, limited attention span, poor motivation). It is

important to note, however, that if an employee displays these symptoms, it does not necessarily mean he/she has a substance abuse problem.

Signs that substance use may be a workplace hazard include:

- * Creating mishaps, being careless and repeatedly making mistakes.
- * Damaging equipment or property.
- * Being unreliable, not being where he or she should be.
- * Showing a lack of detail on performing routine job duties.
- * Being unwilling to follow directions and being argumentative.
- * Giving elaborate, unbelievable excuses for not fulfilling responsibilities.
- * Taking unnecessary risks.
- * Disregarding safety for self and others.

For everyone's safety, it is important that using alcohol or drugs in the workplace not be accepted. This can be a challenge because sometimes it may seem easier to ignore the problem and unwittingly enable the employee's behavior to continue. For example, the co-worker's problem may be covered up just avoid contact with the problem altogether. Trying to take responsibility by throwing out the person's drugs or making idle threats also tends to be ineffective.

Worker alcohol and drug use cannot be taken lightly, especially in environments where workers rely on each other for safety. While supervisors can confront workers whose behavior affects their job performance, co-workers may be able to help before this occurs. However, it is important for employees to understand that it is not their responsibility to diagnose problems. Rather, they should observe behavior and focus on safety. Though notifying a supervisor may eventually be necessary, a co-worker may have significant influence using the right approach.

It is important to note that even after confronting a co-worker using these steps, he/she may still be unwilling to accept or acknowledge the alcohol or drug problem. When you have done all you can and the person's behavior is such that it directly affects you and your ability to do your job, it may be appropriate to involve others. This may mean taking your concerns about safety to a supervisor, who may have more options through the workplace to help the person get assistance.

Workplace safety, on-site or on the road, is everybody's responsibility. Every company should dedicate time and resources to educate employees about steps they can take to help a co-worker who may have an alcohol or drug problem. By knowing what to do (and what not to do), employees can play a powerful role in improving workplace safety and encouraging co-workers with alcohol or drug problems to seek help. **Call 802-651-1550, or visit the Vermont Department of Health Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs at: <http://healthvermont.gov/adap/adap.aspx>**

Destroying the Myth: Low Speeds and Short Trips

Many people in Vermont, in fact, more than half of those involved in fatal motor vehicle crashes do not wear seatbelts for a variety of reasons – most of which are myths that can easily be eliminated.

Some folks claim that seatbelts are not needed when traveling at low speeds or when going on a short trip.

Well, the truth is that eighty percent of all motor vehicle crashes happen at speeds of less than 40 miles per hour. Three out of four crashes causing a fatality occur within 25 miles of home. The short trip to the grocery store, taking children to ball practice or dance lessons, is the type of trip that is the most dangerous if seatbelts are not worn.

States Get Tough On Roadway Safety

If you happen to be traveling through Maryland and are stopped for texting while driving (other than an emergency), you can expect a fine of \$500 and one point on your driver's license. That is a new rule that went into effect in Maryland on October 1. Drivers under age 18 with a provisional license in Maryland are banned from using cell phones, except for emergencies.

Maryland is also tougher than it has been on drinking and driving. One law says it is illegal for people under age 21 to consume alcohol, period. Another measure criminalizes the act of providing alcohol to minors. Repeat offenders of impaired driving laws can now lose their licenses for one year.

Maryland has also approved the use of speed cameras in construction zones on expressways and controlled-access roads where the speed limit is at least 45 mph, and in school zones. The cameras will take pictures of motor vehicles traveling at least 12 mph faster than the posted limit. After 30 days of warnings, violators can be fined up to \$40.

In Arkansas, text-driving has been banned for all drivers. Several other states will have laws banning text-driving by January 2010.

People Are Very Creative: The following is taken from an actual accident report:

"I had been learning to drive with power steering. I turned the wheel to what I thought was enough and

found myself in a different direction going the opposite way."

Brochures Are Available

Project RoadSafe has produced several brochures about workplace traffic safety that are available on request, or can be downloaded from the Vermont Department of Labor website. The brochures include:

- ♦ ***A Workplace Traffic Safety Program for Your Company***
- ♦ ***The Cost of Workers' Compensation is Directly Impacted by Workplace Traffic Safety***
- ♦ ***Telling the Parents: A Trooper's Story About the Kids Who Lost***
- ♦ ***The Anatomy of A Crash: Death in Less than a Second!***

- ♦ ***Behavior Skills on the Road: Attitude Makes the Difference***
- ♦ ***Employers: Take Note of Workplace Traffic Safety***
- ♦ ***The Real Story About The Cost of Traffic Crashes***

These brochures can be used to help your employees better understand the need for, and benefits of an effective workplace traffic safety program.

These brochures are available in special packets by emailing: norman.james@state.vt.us or by visiting the Project RoadSafe website: www.labor.vermont.gov (under "business" click "Workplace Safety" then click "Project RoadSafe.")

Employer Guidebook to Reduce Traffic Crashes

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have joined forces to create ***Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes*** featuring a 10-step program to help improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. To receive your guide, use the contact information in the next column.

Contact:

Norman James, Manager
Project RoadSafe
Vermont Department of Labor
5 Green Mountain Drive
P.O. Box 488
Montpelier, VT 05601
Tel: 802-828-4172
Eml: norman.james@state.vt.us

Inattention, speed, driving while impaired, disregard for stop signs and traffic lights, and failure to yield the right of way are the major causes of crashes on our highways.

**REMEMBER:
Hang Up The Phone and
Buckle Up Your Seatbelt**

Project Road-Safe newsletters are available from the Home Page of the Vermont Department of Labor. Go to: www.labor.vermont.gov. Then go to "Newsletters" in the right-hand column for our latest issue.