TRAFFIC SAFETY DURING COVID-19

In the midst of all of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, one thing has become clear — the need to prioritize safety. Roadway safety is part of this. If we can change our habits, behaviors, and systems to address COVID-19 and prevent deaths related to it, we should be able to do the same to prevent deaths happening on our streets. You can read more about how the National Safety Council thinks COVID-19 can offer lessons for roadway safety.

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

Between April 1 and May 21, Minnesota State Troopers cited 232 drivers for exceeding 100 mph — a 149% increase compared to the same time frame last year. With fewer drivers on the road, the natural deterrent of traffic has largely disappeared. Open roads are not an invitation to drive faster. Resources used to address speeding, whether it be enforcement, emergency medical services or others, are more needed at this time to address the challenges of COVID-19.

According to the National Safety Council, speeding is one of the leading causes of the nearly 40,000 traffic fatalities that occur each year. It is a major roadway safety concern, and one that requires appropriate action and attention.

• The faster you go, the more severe a crash will be, which could lead to more severe injuries or death.
• The average pedestrian has roughly a 90% chance of surviving if struck by a vehicle traveling at 20 mph — this drops to about 20% if struck at 40 mph.
• Speeding-related crashes cost Americans $40.4 billion each year.

Encourage safe driving within your organization — all road users are on a journey to get somewhere, but no amount of time saved is worth driving unsafe. Monitoring speed is one of the most important things a driver can do to contribute to a safe environment. It protects the driver and vehicle occupants, other drivers and road users, and promotes a culture of safety.

All of us can reduce speeding risks by driving safely. Register to receive the National Safety Council’s free Safe Driving Tool Kit to start implementing safe practices in your workplace today.

Don’t let these gorgeous summer days fool you: Exceeding the speed limit is dangerous, even on dry roads in broad daylight. Leave in plenty of time to get to your destination, observe all posted speed limits and drive for conditions on your way, and most of all, have a safe summer.

Work Zone Crashes

Did you know? Driver speeding and inattention are the main causes of work zone crashes. Follow these safe driving tips:

• Stay alert, especially at night.
• Stay off cell phones and mobile devices.
• Be patient. Expect delays, especially during peak travel times.
• Obey posted speed limits. Fines may double for violations in work zones.
• Expect work zones to constantly change. Day to day, you could experience lane shifts, closures or moving workers and vehicles.
• Don’t make unnecessary lane changes.
• Do the zipper merge.
• Never enter a road blocked with barriers or cones.

Visit the MN NETS website for work zone safety materials.

MINNESOTA NETS provides resources, consultation and speakers to help employers promote traffic safety. Questions? Contact Lisa Kons at 651-228-7330/800-444-9150; lisa.kons@minnesotasafetycouncil.org.
What are your workplace driving risks?

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of workplace deaths, and pedestrian fatalities are on the rise. Think through on-the-job risks to stay safe around vehicles in your workplace:

- Use crosswalks and designated walkways to stay clear of vehicles
- When working near forklifts and similar vehicles, wear safety vests for extra visibility
- Avoid audio, visual and cognitive distractions to stay aware of the vehicles around you
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them
- Report hazards such as wet floors or torn seat belts to keep yourself and your co-workers safe
- Always use signals and lights when driving, and give pedestrians the right of way
- Obey posted speed limits and signs

Whether the driver’s seat is your workstation or your commute is the bulk of your driving time, staying safe on the road requires your full attention. Before getting behind the wheel, ask yourself: what is keeping you from driving at your best?

- Are you fatigued from a lack of sleep?
- Are you impaired in any way from substances such as cannabis, alcohol or prescription opioids?
- Are you dealing with distractions from inside or outside the vehicle?
- Is the weather creating dangerous driving conditions where you are or where you plan to drive?
- Is a personal issue weighing on you or bringing up strong emotions?

Never take your driving ability for granted. Pay attention to the vehicles and conditions around you, and stay aware of potential hazards to keep yourself and your co-workers safe. Everyone is responsible for safe driving in the workplace, whether you’re walking or behind the wheel.