

# AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety PROGRESS REPORT

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## **LIES, LIES, LIES: STUDY SHOWS MOTORISTS LESS THAN TRUTHFUL ABOUT ALCOHOL, BELT USE**

A report from Hawaii demonstrates a basic fact of human nature: People will lie to avoid punishment. Drivers in crashes will overstate their use of seat belts and understate their use of alcohol to police, but are more truthful with their doctors.

Dr. Karl Kim of the University of Hawaii at Manoa used a linked database of 369 police crash reports and hospital records to study the "lie factor" in crash reporting. On looking at the records of drivers admitted to a hospital after crashing, he found that police reported a belt use rate of 88 percent while hospitals recorded 60 percent. For alcohol the situation was reversed: Police reports showed an alcohol use rate of 8 percent, while the hospital rate was 26 percent.

In Hawaii, emergency room patients are routinely tested for blood alcohol to prevent drug interactions. In addition, medical personnel can observe patterns of injury that indicate whether or not the patient was wearing a seat belt. As Dr. Kim states, "The reporting of hospitals with regard to belt and alcohol use is considered more accurate and reliable than information derived solely from police crash reports."

While both sexes lie, males lie more than females; 92 percent of males and 85 percent of females reported belt use to the police, even though the hospital-determined rate for both sexes was 60 percent. Lying about belt use is also worse at night, on weekdays, and in urban areas. Lying about alcohol is worse on weekends.

Information is more accurate for seriously injured victims, Dr. Kim states. "Victims who are either incapacitated or killed may not be able to respond to questions from the police."

Unsurprisingly, lying goes beyond belt and alcohol use. Kim cites a study of child seat use in which 90 percent of parents reported that they used car seats. An on-site observation showed a real use rate "close to 50 percent."

## **SOFTWARE IMPROVEMENTS MAKE DRIVER-ZED EASIER, FASTER, SMOOTHER RUNNING**

The Foundation's revisions of its driver-ZED CD-ROM software have minimized glitches for users. The 1999 version of this innovative risk management program for teen drivers uses the same video, but has solved computer incompatibilities users have reported over the past year.

New files have been added to address certain Pentium II processors that were having difficulty running driver-ZED. In addition, specific scenes that caused some computers to freeze or run at a lower quality now work smoothly. The changes in this increasingly popular teen driving instruction tool will make it even more accessible to all users.

The Foundation has made these new executable files available for owners of the original driver-ZED. Visit <http://www.driverzed.org> to update your older version with the new files. Easy-to-follow instructions will walk you through the downloading steps and provide details about situations where these files may be needed.

## **DRIVER-ZED GOES TO CLASS**

AAA Tuscarawas has added a new dimension to their driver education classes: A big-screen TV attached to a computer that runs driver-ZED. When he remodeled his office last year Rick



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Ramsey, Traffic Safety Director of AAA Tuscarawas in New Philadelphia, OH, made sure that all the new computers were ZED-compatible - particularly the one in the driver training class-

room. "We decided that driver-ZED would be a perfect fit with our driver education classes, especially since Ohio's new graduated driver licensing law requires us to provide eight more hours of classroom instruction than before," Ramsey says.

Students use the program as a group, Ramsey explains. "We have one class per month with about 40 to 60 kids in each class. It's six

classes at four hours each." Students learn the usual driver education curriculum, but for the final hour of the class they take turns at the mouse, going through driver-ZED and judging each others' performance. "Our drivers' ed instructor has said that the reaction has been very positive," Ramsay reports. "The kids are excited about trying something new."

Ramsey says he's also exploring the possibility of setting up some driver-ZED kiosks at the local "Safe Kids" presentations and as part of a teen driving rodeo. "The kids have been enthusiastic about it," he says.



## MISSOURI KIOSK SHOWS OFF DRIVER-ZED

The Missouri State Highway Patrol has a new multimedia addition to their safety center — a kiosk that allows visitors to experience driver-ZED. Mike Right, Vice President of Public

Affairs for AAA Missouri, presents the computer kiosk to Captain Jim Watson of the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

## PARENTS OVER- OPTIMISTIC ABOUT CHILDREN'S TRAFFIC JUDGEMENT, STUDY SAYS

Parents give their children credit for better judgment than they actually have, researchers revealed at the Transportation Research Board meetings in Washington, D.C. Carolyn MacGregor, Alison Smiley, and Wendy Dunk found that parents are overoptimistic about their children's ability to deal with difficult traffic situations, particularly for children 5-12.

The researchers covertly observed 208 children as they crossed the street. At intersections without signals, 37 percent of children did not look for traffic before crossing. Only 21 percent checked both to the left and right before crossing. Older children were less likely to look than younger children. At intersections with signals, 91 percent began crossing when the light was green and the rest started crossing when the light was amber.

Researchers then interviewed 30 parents in the same neighborhood. (These were not necessarily parents of the observed children.) The parents were asked what age was appropriate to cross streets alone and about safety instruction. Parents said they would allow children to cross alone at between nine and ten years of age. However, the age of "traffic maturity" is 12, an age at which children are able to listen, scan, and make safe decisions about traffic. All parents said

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they gave frequent traffic safety instructions to their children.

The researchers concluded that parents need better information about the limited traffic safety abilities of children of various ages. They also recommended an educational campaign directed at drivers to increase awareness of children's traffic behavior.

## FIRST FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP AWARDED

Jacqueline Jenkins of Etobicoke, Canada, has been awarded the first AAA Foundation Fellowship in Traffic Safety. Ms. Jenkins will receive financial

assistance from the Foundation to continue her studies at the Texas Transportation Institute in College Station, TX. A graduate of the University of Waterloo, Ms. Jenkins most recently has worked as a collision investigator at the Vehicle Safety Research Centre at Ryerson Polytechnic University.

"In school I started taking transportation courses and that developed the career path for me," Ms. Jenkins explains. "I've been looking for options for pursuing a career in traffic safety and when this opportunity came up it was a good match." Her main interests are collision avoidance and occupant protection, though, she admits, "there's much to be learned in both and I'm not ruling out any other study."

Dan Fambro, Associate Professor of Civil Engineering at TTI, says he's enthusiastic about Ms. Jenkins' arrival and the beginning of the Foundation fellowship program. "Looking at her resume and experience, we thought she was a perfect fit," he says. "We're trying to get this program started, trying to get the word out, and we have other people interested in entering the program in the future."

The Foundation will eventually fund four student fellowships in traffic safety at TTI, adding one candidate per year for each of the next three years.



*Jacqueline Jenkins of Etobicoke, Canada, has been awarded the first AAA Foundation Fellowship in Traffic Safety.*

## PRAISE FOR PROGRESS REPORT

Thanks to all of you who sent in your address-change cards from the last issue. We were pleased to get many enthusiastic comments about *Progress Report*.

Here are some samples:

***"It keeps me up to date. It makes me aware of new products, new ideas — don't stop sending it!"***

- Wes McClellan, Milton High School, VT

***"The info is informative and up-to-date. AAA Foundation is a leader in traffic safety."***

- Suzanne Vance, Vance Driving School, ME

***"It is very interesting and informative — pertinent matters that do affect school bus drivers. Keep up the good work."***

- Matt Kutcher, Crook County School District, OR

***"Our department is the lead agency for Safe Communities and Safe Kids. This information is essential to these programs."***

- Siouxland District Health Department, IA

***"Excellent safety emphasis. Shows AAA's commitment to communities."***

- Catherine Walker, Draeger Safety, Inc., CO

## AFTERNOON NAPS IMPROVE DRIVER PERFORMANCE

A study presented at the Transportation Research Board meetings in January demonstrated that preventive napping improves driver performance. Researchers Thomas A. Ranney, Lucinda A. Simmons, Ziad Boulos, and M. Mila Macchi recruited professional long-haul truck drivers and tested them in driving simulators. The drivers were allowed five hours of sleep at night and then "drove" the simulator for 12 hours. For half the runs, drivers lay in darkness between 2 and 5 p.m.; the other half of the time drivers were allowed any sedentary activity. Drivers then continued the run until 8 the next morning. As an incentive, drivers were rewarded financially for faster completion times and penalized for crashes, for failing to spot simulated "pedestrians," and for "tickets" when they exceeded the speed limit. —continued next page

### **AFTERNOON NAPS** (continued)

"Drivers detected fewer mirror targets and became slower in detecting pedestrian targets over time," researchers found. Drivers who napped had significantly fewer "crashes" than drivers who stayed awake through the afternoon and also completed the test in a shorter time than those who did not nap. "The afternoon nap improved overall driving performance, including reductions in crash frequencies, faster completion times, and larger monetary rewards," researchers concluded.

### **NEW PHOTO LIBRARY ON FOUNDATION WEB SITE**

Need some art in your newsletter to go with that story about older driver safety? Looking for a photo of an enraged driver for that road rage

article? Search no further — the AAA Foundation is adding a collection of traffic safety pictures to its web site. This photo library will allow visitors to view and download photos in all of the traffic safety areas covered by the Foundation.

Categories will include older driver safety; teen and new driver safety; aggressive driving; highway signs and markings; vehicle safety; impaired driving, skating, bicycle safety, and school bus safety. The pictures are being gathered from Foundation videos, field work, and ongoing safety-related studies. There will also be photos of Foundation staff.

Thumbnail images will allow visitors to view a number of related pictures simultaneously and enlarge only those photos that may be of interest. This system cuts down considerably on time waiting for photos to download. Visit the Foundation's web site at <http://www.aaafoundation.org> and click on the photo library icon.

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