

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety PROGRESS REPORT

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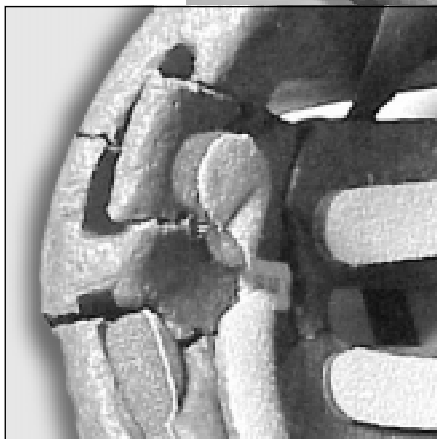
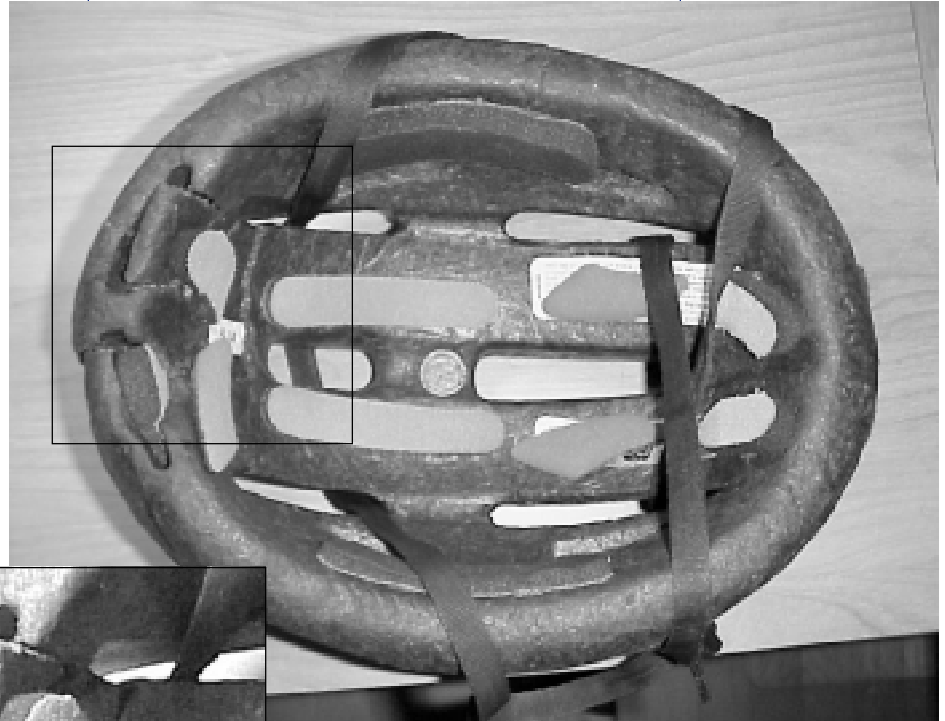
DR. OSBERG PROVES IT: HELMETS SAVE HEADS!

"Sometimes I'm tempted not to wear my helmet," says Dr. Scott Osberg, the Foundation's research director, "But I always do it." Recently, that habit paid off. On a sunny afternoon Osberg was skating near the U.S. Capitol when he fell over backwards and hit his head. "I had just skated down the steps backwards, and was doing a very simple backwards move on a flat surface and lost it," Osberg says. "I hit a little crack or something like that, and just spilled."

Though Osberg was severely bruised and sore for a week he was otherwise uninjured. His helmet is another story: "The helmet is fractured in quite a few spots around the back where I hit the pavement," he says. "I hate to think what my head would be like if I hadn't been wearing it."

Osberg, the AAA Foundation's research director, is an avid and experienced inline skater and goes out on weekly excursions with the Washington Area Rollerskaters, the local skate club. He already knew about the benefits of wearing a helmet, though not from personal experience. In a study he published in the local roller skating newsletter, he analyzed 51 skating deaths and found that 78 percent died from head injuries. None was recorded as wearing a helmet, even though many of the fatalities were experienced skaters.

In fact, Osberg says, seasoned skaters and bicyclists often forego helmet use because of overconfidence. "A lot of skaters get good and think 'well, I haven't fallen,'" and stop using their



safety equipment because they feel like they're in control. A recent study in the American Journal of Public Health found that 62 percent of injured skaters had more than a year of skating experience before they were hurt. The most important factors associated with injury

included the number of hours skating, performing tricks or stunts, and the locations used – areas with ramps, railings, and ledges were more hazardous than streets. (Osberg was skating on a stone pavement when he fell.)

NEW FOUNDATION FELLOW

The AAA Foundation has awarded its second traffic safety fellowship to Karl H. Zimmerman, who will begin studying for his Ph.D. at Texas A&M University's civil engineering department

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NEW FOUNDATION FELLOW (continued)

this summer. Zimmerman graduated from the University of Oklahoma and has a master's from the University of Nebraska.



Karl H. Zimmerman, the Foundation's newest Traffic Safety Fellow.

"I got started in safety when I was at the University of Nebraska," where he got his M.S., Zimmerman says. "Crashes are random, rare events, and are influenced by a wide variety of factors relating to the driver, the vehicle, the roadway, and the environmental conditions. Finding the causes is the most important element of safety work." Zimmerman started work on a computerized benefit/cost program to determine what kinds of safety hardware should be used on roadsides.

"The longer I worked on it the more interested I got," he explains. "With traffic safety in general you are looking at how people are behaving on the road, what they are doing that is causing the problem, and what can be done to relieve the problem, assuming there is one we can deal with. And the idea of solving a problem that can affect people's everyday lives became more appealing to me the longer I worked on it."

After receiving his M.S., Zimmerman went to work for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, where he worked on narrow bridge projects and on the effect of increased speed limits on crash frequency. "It was in the special projects that I found what I really liked to do: Investigate a problem and find out what was happening."

For his Ph.D. at Texas A&M, Zimmerman says he's looking at a number of topics, including roadside safety and hardware testing. "Otherwise, another area that I might work in is neighborhood safety. I haven't really decided." With traffic safety, "there is always more to learn, more to know, more to apply," Zimmerman says.

"About 45,000 people a year are dying on American streets and highways. Why? How can this be prevented, or at least reduced? This is the problem I want to work on."

DRIVER-ZED DONATION BRINGS SAFETY TO SCHOOLS

Donald Newman, a member of the AAA Foundation Board of Trustees, is a big driver-ZED fan — so much that he has donated \$1,000 worth of the CD-ROMs to New York State high schools. The members of AAA Western and Central New York have also been generous with their donations through the club's \$1 "roll-on" donation program. As a result, the AAA Foundation has donated three computers to schools in Buffalo, NY, including McKinley Vocational and Hutchinson Technical high schools, so students there can reap the benefits of driver-ZED.

"I thought this thing was outstanding," Newman says of driver-ZED. With his own children, Newman says, "I went through all of the driving and the minor accidents and the speeding tickets and that sort of stuff. I raised four sons who are now worrying about their kids." With public schools dropping driver education, Newman says, he wanted to make sure kids could use driver-ZED for safety training. "I've got 12-year-old grandsons who are using it," Newman says. "They think it's a game, but at least they're becoming aware early."

Wally Smith, Vice President of AAA Western and Central New York, reports that driver-ZED was well received in at least one school. At a press conference announcing the donation, "We had a demo there and we had some high school kids who played around with driver-ZED. It was fun."

Progress Report is issued every other month by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, a not-for-profit, publicly-supported charitable educational and research organization. Visit our web site at <http://www.aaafoundation.org>

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NEW YORK DRIVERS LEARN SAFETY WHILE WAITING ON LINE

Motorists in Niagara County, New York, can now study safety while renewing their licenses. AAA Niagara-Orleans and AAA Western and Central New York clubs have cooperated to donate televisions to local Department of Motor Vehicles offices in Lockport, North Tonawanda, and Niagara Falls. The televisions are located in DMV waiting areas and show endless loops of AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety videotapes.

"Our local county clerk Wayne Jagow called and told me he wanted to put a combination TV-VCR in the DMV offices and wondered if we would be willing to purchase them," explains Marion Bicker, President and CEO of Niagara Orleans.

"So many times I think the Foundation's safety films don't get the exposure they really should, because they're excellent." Putting videos in DMV waiting areas brings the safety videos to a whole new audience, Bicker explains. "Each time I go there the office is packed, and they're sitting there and waiting, so this will be great exposure for the films. And many times they are people who need some traffic safety education."

Drivers at the DMV offices won't get bored soon with the tapes – the program includes six of the Foundation videos, including *Driving in Bad Weather*, *The Older and Wiser Driver*, *Semi-Conscious: Driving in the Real World* (a video about sharing the road with trucks), *Managing Space and Time for Safe Driving*, *Unlocking the Mystery of ABS*, and *Preventing Road Rage*. Motorists would have to wait nearly two hours before they saw a repeat.

NO TRUTH TO TALL TALES

Journalists call summer the "Silly Season" because of the lack of news. It also appears to be a season for groundless rumors, as two silly auto safety stories have recently surfaced in the media. Neither appears to have any validity, but that doesn't stop people from printing the stories and sending them out on the Internet.

The first fable involves cell phones setting off gasoline vapors. Recently the town of Cicero, Illinois banned the use of cell phones at gas

stations because of this perceived danger. The fact that nobody can find any incidents where a cell phone has ever started such an explosion doesn't seem to matter. Certainly it's important to use a cell phone safely, but in real life, gas stations don't seem to be the big problem area. A better safety bet would be to reduce phone use in the car and to follow the three rules for using car phone: Keep the conversation light, keep it short, and hang up as soon as traffic gets tough.

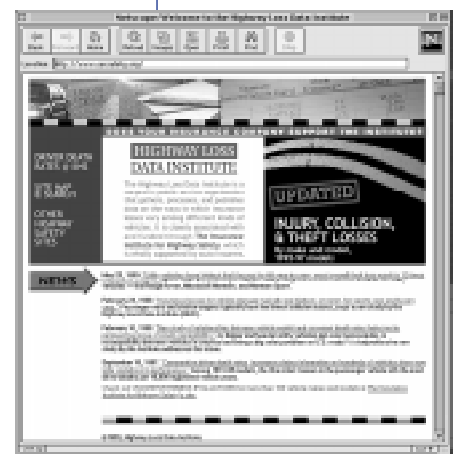
The second tale describes how a police officer was killed when he used a "slim jim," a flat metal tool used to open locked car doors, on a door with side-impact air bags. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration investigated this rumor and has labeled it a fable. There's no report that such an incident has ever occurred. Also, manufacturers say it is impossible to deploy a side-impact airbag by using a slim jim. Finally, side-impact bags have less power than front-impact bags, and thus are unlikely to cause injury — especially to someone who is outside the car.

SHOPPING FOR A NEW CAR? THINK SAFETY

For car shoppers who rate safety highly, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and AAA have cooperated to produce a safety guide. You can order a free copy of the brochure "Shopping for a Safer Car" by calling 1-888-DASH-2-DOT, or look for the information online at <<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>>

NHTSA is the Federal government agency responsible for reducing deaths, injuries, and economic losses caused by motor vehicle crashes. The agency sets and enforces traffic safety performance standards for motor vehicles, and conducts crash testing to determine how well different models protect passengers.

Another source for information about the relative safety of individual models is the Highway Loss Data Institute, whose web site at <http://www.carsafety.org> provides data on injury claims, repair costs, and theft.



HIGH SCHOOL BELT CHECK SHOWS KIDS DON'T BUCKLE

Jolene McNally had always insisted that her children wear seat belts. "But," she says, "once they become teenagers and they're out on their own, you really don't know."

McNally is a pre-load supervisor for the United Parcel Service office in Island Falls, Maine, where she is active with the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS). As part of "Drive Safely At Work Week," she and her safety committee talked about seat belt use. "They said, 'We know we wear seat belts all the time, but what are school kids doing?'"

The result was a morning seat-belt check at Katahdin High School — and an unpleasant surprise for McNally. McNally and a co-worker parked their UPS truck and stopped students' cars as they entered the parking lot. "We'd say, 'Just doing a seat belt check, oh, you're wearing your seat belt, may I have your name? There's going to be a prize.' And the ones that didn't, we just did a slash so we'd have a count."

Of the 64 students who drove or rode with other students, 45 were not wearing their seat belts. "I didn't tell my kids we were coming," she says, and when she checked their car, "Three of

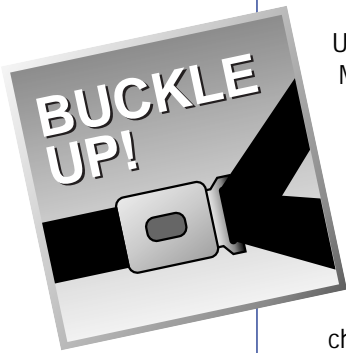
the four did not have seat belts on, and they were my own children." The one daughter who was wearing her belt had been in several crashes, McNally explains.

Rather than punishing or singling out the students without belts, McNally wrote down the names of the 19 belted students and invited them all to a pizza party in the school lobby. "Everybody was walking through saying, 'what's going on?' Well, these students had their seat belts on," she says. "It brought up an incredible amount of awareness and conversation. I was serving pizza and listening to the kids talk. Not one of them said 'My parents make me.' They said 'It's become a habit and I just do it.'"

McNally explains that it's important to reward those who do wear their belts rather than to shame those who don't. "Only acknowledge the kids that do, because if you get into 'So and so didn't have a seatbelt' you're going to have irate parents," she says.

Next year McNally is going to work harder to get teens belted. "I'd like to do something starting off the school year, get the student council involved so they're out there doing a check once a week. It doesn't matter if the kids get up to the checkpoint and put the seat belt on. Well, they put it on, and it'll become a habit.

"It was terrifying for me to see three of my children without their seat belts on," she says. "Don't think for a minute your kids are going to buckle up because you tell them to."



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