

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

PROGRESS REPORT

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DROWSY = DRUNK = DEADLY

Everyone knows drinking and driving don't mix, and more people are becoming aware of how dangerous drowsy driving is. In fact, a sober but sleepy driver often appears to be under the influence of alcohol. (See "Troopers Can't Tell Drunk from Drowsy, Study Shows," Progress Report, May/June 1996)

Now researchers at the Centre for Sleep Research at the University of South Australia have developed a scale that equates hours of continuous wakefulness with blood alcohol content (BAC). The researchers tested subjects for cognitive psycho-motor performance — the ability to make judgments combined with reaction time and hand/eye coordination. A BAC below .03 percent or wakefulness for 10 hours or less did not affect subjects' performance. But as people drank more or became more tired, both groups' performance declined at a steady rate and researchers were able to correlate time awake to amount of alcohol consumed. In other words, a person who had been awake for 18 hours was impaired to about the same extent as someone who had a BAC of .05. Researchers discovered that a full 24 hours of wakefulness causes impairment nearly equal to a BAC of .10 — legally intoxicated in all 50 states.

This means that a college student or shift worker who has been awake for 24 hours is as impaired as a legally drunk driver. "We've been saying that drowsy driving is as dangerous as drunk driving," says Foundation president David Willis. "This study gives traffic safety professionals a way of comparing the two conditions."

There's also an important interaction between alcohol and drowsiness. "Sleep researchers have known for years that alcohol unmasks sleepiness," Willis says. A fatigued person will show a decline in performance with a BAC as low as .01. Willis urges tired drivers to watch their drinking: "Drivers need to understand that

even one beer after a work week of only four or five hours of sleep a night can dangerously impair driving performance."

DRIVER-ZED HITS THE ROAD, SCORES AT COMDEX

Teens can now learn about managing traffic risks without risking their parents' car — because the Foundation's new driver-ZED CD-ROM enables them to learn by using a computer.

"It's the result of a long and difficult process," says Foundation president David Willis of the project. "We're extremely pleased with the result, and so are the teens we've showed it to. Driver educators say that using this program really does appear to make teens more aware of what's in their mirrors and on the lookout for traffic problems."

A near-final version of driver-ZED was sent to high schools and driver educators for testing, along with questionnaires that asked what technical problems the users experienced and how they felt about the program. "The results were overwhelmingly positive," says Christopher Johnson, the Foundation's research analyst, who directed the project. "The driver educators who evaluated it all gave it a nine or a 10 on a one-to-10 scale." Students found driver-ZED easy to use and also gave it high marks.

A fairly powerful computer is needed to run driver-ZED, and the program works best with the REALmagic MPEG card produced by Sigma



Driver-ZED users must identify road hazards.

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DRIVER-ZED—from page 1

Designs of Fremont, CA. The Foundation has agreed to distribute Sigma's MPEG cards at a reduced price, bundled together with the driver-ZED software.

On their part, Sigma Designs introduced driver-ZED to the computer world at Comdex, the country's largest computer show, in Las Vegas. The program got a lot of attention from visitors to the Sigma Designs booth. "The response for the title was very favorable," says Patricia Herron of Sigma Designs. "The AAA station was occupied 95 percent of the time from curious users testing their own driving abilities. Many commented that the price for the title and the REALmagic MPEG 1 decoder was a small price to pay to increase the skill levels of their own new drivers and ultimately for peace of mind."

The driver-ZED can be ordered from the Foundation for \$29.95, which includes shipping and handling, or \$149.95 bundled with the REALmagic MPEG card. This represents a significant discount over the retail cost of the card. To order, call 1-800-305-SAFE or fax an order to 202/638-5943.

BOB STRATTON LEAVES THE FOUNDATION

Bob Stratton, the Foundation's marketing manager, will leave at the end of December after 14 years of handling all phases of production and distribution for the Foundation's safety products. (If you're reading this, thank Bob — he also manages circulation of the newsletter.)

"It's been a privilege to be a part of such an important mission," Stratton says. "But I'm looking forward to spending time at home with my new daughter." Stratton's daughter Julianne was born on November 13, and he says he plans to be a full-time dad for "at least a few months." He'll then move on to a career in his true passion, financial management. Stratton also promises

he'll be taking phone calls from the office for at least the first few weeks he's gone, so the Foundation can continue to provide answers to customers' questions.



Robert Stratton



IT'S "JUST ANOTHER SATURDAY NIGHT"

For years "Just Another Friday Night" has been one of the Foundation's best-selling videos. Its realistic style, excellent production values, and professional acting all add impact to its strong message. But since the video was produced in 1984 much has changed — liquor laws are stricter, and the video's once-hip soundtrack sounds dated.

The new version of this powerful mini-drama, called "Just Another Saturday Night," tells a similar story, that of a high school senior named Lake. Lake is about to leave for college when he goes to a party with his girlfriend Anna and best friend Hooper. At the party he has a

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few drinks before driving his friends home. But alcohol impairs his judgment and he causes a crash that disfigures Anna and kills Hooper.

Like "Just Another Friday Night," "Just Another Saturday Night" leaves viewers with an ambiguous ending that asks, "What is the driver's responsibility when faced with the temptation of alcohol?" As a "discussion trigger" film, "Just Another Saturday Night" challenges teens to evaluate their own and others' behavior in light of the potential for tragic consequences.

The updated video costs \$40. To order, call 1-800-305-SAFE or fax an order to 202/638-5944. "Just Another Friday Night" will also be available for those who want the original version.

UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF ABS

Antilock brakes can save lives — but as a Foundation poll two years ago found, drivers often don't understand how they work and may not use them properly. The Foundation produced its first video on antilock brakes, "Don't Let Up," to tell drivers to stomp on the pedal in a skid rather than pump the brakes, as most drivers have been taught for decades.

New evidence shows that panic steering with antilock brakes (ABS) may also cause problems. Studies by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety did not find a significant reduction in crash risk for cars with ABS. However, the vehicles had two different types of crashes: Cars without ABS tended to skid into an object in the roadway, while cars with ABS had more run-off-the-road crashes. This indicates that improper steering may be a problem with ABS vehicles.

The Foundation created "Unlocking the Mystery of ABS" to give drivers information about how to steer with antilock brakes. "Most importantly, don't jerk the wheel," says Foundation president David Willis. "It's a natural thing to do, but with ABS the car will respond to steering input and go off to the side. This is even more of a problem on dry pavement, when traction is good." Without ABS, a vehicle will continue to skid forward and hit whatever is in front of it.

"Unlocking the Mystery of ABS" takes the form of a hard-boiled traffic detective mystery. In the opening scene, a young couple comes to a private eye for help following a crash. The detective sends them to a test track, where they find out using ABS and how steering contributed to their crash.

"We made the video entertaining as well as informative because we want people to watch it," Willis says. "As today's cars become more sophisticated, drivers need better education about how to use them. Potentially lifesaving features like ABS and air bags must be used properly in order to work."

"Unlocking the Mystery of ABS" is essential viewing for all drivers who use ABS-equipped cars, and is priced at \$40 from the Foundation.

ARIZONA CLUB TELLS MILITARY, "WAKE UP!"

"Their concern primarily was young military men who were heading out for the holidays," says Cydney DeModica to explain why she was invited to give traffic safety presentations at the Marine Corps Air Station, Yuma, Arizona. DeModica, public relations and traffic safety manager for AAA Arizona, figured that drowsy driving would be a big problem and took a box of the AAA Foundation's "Wake Up!" tapes. She also took Safe-T-Man, an inflatable dummy.

"They had experienced some fatalities and one injury that resulted in someone being paralyzed from car crashes," DeModica says, adding that motor vehicles are the single biggest cause of death for active duty military personnel. "So the commanding officer and the safety officer were both really concerned that they do some kind of awareness program before the holidays."

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"Unlocking the Mystery of ABS" shows how jerking the wheel can cause problems with using ABS.



Cydney DeModica

WAKE UP! *—from page 3*

DeModica introduced her presentation by playing a few seconds from the “Wake Up” tape. “At the end the officer who had invited me wheeled Safe-T-Man out in a wheelchair,” she says. “I told the troops, ‘This guy had to be dressed this morning and he will have to be dressed every morning because he can’t do it himself. We don’t want you to end up like this.’ — it was a real wake-up call.”

The “Wake Up!” tapes helped the troops by giving them an easy way to learn about drowsy driving while they were actually on the road, DeModica says. “The tapes just flew out of there,” DeModica says. “I had taken a carton never thinking they would all like to have one, but they did.”

A similar scenario played out a few days later at the US Army Proving Grounds, which is also in Yuma. “My presentation then was coping with older driver issues. Yuma is a tourism destination and has a high number of winter

visitors, many of them elderly. It comes around to the younger drivers or middle mix to be watching out for older drivers.” However, DeModica realized that her audience would also be thinking about long-distance holiday travel. “Because people do think they’re going to do marathon driving I made the ‘Wake Up!’ tapes a part of that as well. One more time, people just fell on them.”

COUNTING CARS IN SHIPROCK, N.M.

A test of the Foundation’s innovative pavement markings began in Shiprock, New Mexico, on July 25. For the coming year, wire loops embedded in the pavement will determine the speed, size, and change in velocity of vehicles entering the town. Next summer the markings themselves will be installed and data collected for another year.