

PENNSYLVANIA SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

There are 19 million collisions every year on America's highways. One out of every nine licensed drivers will have a collision this year. Don't be one of the nine!

Summer is around the corner and people are beginning to think about vacations and day trips as they take advantage of the longer days, warmer nights, cookouts and backyard barbecues.

In this issue, we offer tips, suggestions and some common sense advice as you take to the roads and highways. Whether your travels take you around town, to the mall, to the mountains, or the beach, please remember to be alert, drive defensively, wear your seat belt, and always look out for the other driver.

SEAT BELT MYTHS

There are many myths about wearing seat belts, but most of these stories are simply not true. Some myths and the subsequent truths are as follows:

MYTH: Safety belts trap you in the car during an accident.

TRUTH: Safety belts keep you secured and eliminate the chance of getting knocked unconscious. When conscious, there are better chances to escape, as it takes only a second or less to unbuckle the belt.

MYTH: Safety belts are for long drives but not needed for quick, local trips.

TRUTH: 50% of all traffic deaths happen within 25 miles of home. Death can even occur when drivers are traveling at speeds of 40 mph or less.

MYTH: People thrown clear from an accident from

not wearing their safety belt are able to walk away from danger.

TRUTH: The chances of surviving a car accident are 45% greater if you are buckled in the vehicle. If your automobile is hit from the side, staying in the vehicle will prevent you from being thrown into the path of another car, through the windshield or onto the pavement.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 73% of passenger car occupants in the United States who were ejected from the vehicle in an accident did not survive.

MYTH: The vehicle has air bags, so the safety belt does not need to be worn.

TRUTH: Air bags are designed as supplementary restraint systems, which only compliment properly worn seat belts. Both systems used together properly create the optimal safety mechanism for injury prevention.

So take five seconds to buckle up each and every time—it could just save your life!

TEENS AND SEAT BELTS

Teens buckle up far less frequently than adults do. Despite efforts aimed at increasing belt use among teens, observed seat belt use among teens and young adults (16 to 24 years old) stood at 76 percent in 2006 – the lowest of any age group. In fact, in 2006 the majority (58%) of young people 16 to 20 years old involved in fatal motor vehicle crashes were unbuckled.

Parents, remind your teens to buckle up every time they get in a vehicle, whether they are drivers or passengers. Teens, remind your friends to buckle up – you could save a life. Community members and family members, lead by example – buckle up every trip, every time – day and night.

IF YOU DRINK—DON'T DRIVE SOBERING FACTS ABOUT DRINKING AND DRIVING

Alcohol consumption is a major cause of motor vehicle crashes and injury. Historically, about half of all motor vehicle fatalities occur in which a driver has consumed a measurable level of alcohol prior to the crash.

In 2006, an estimated 256,000 people were injured in alcohol related crashes and 13,470 people were killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. These alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 32 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States.

The 13,470 fatalities in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes during 2006 represent an average of one alcohol-impaired-driving fatality every 39 minutes.

According to the NHTSA, 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol related crash at some point. It is always best to have a designated driver or restrain from drinking and driving than to lose your life.

Costs and Penalties Associated with Driving Under the Influence (DUI)

In Pennsylvania, the maximum allowed Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is .08%, for those under the age of 21, the BAC is .02%, and for truck drivers, it is .04%, but driving with any level of alcohol in your system is dangerous.

If arrested for driving under the influence, you may be able to apply for ARD through your county District Attorney's office. The exact terms and conditions vary from county to county.

If convicted of DUI, you now have a criminal record, possible jail time from 48 hours up to 2 years, one year suspension of your driver's license, probation/supervision, court costs, fines from \$300. To \$3,000., potential increase to your automobile insurance, expensive legal fees, lost work time and wages.

The message here is very clear. DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE!

Additional information on drinking and driving facts, figures and penalties, is available on the following websites:

www.lcb.state.pa.us/edu/
www.nhtsa.dot.gov

PARKING LOT DANGERS

By Gary Nicholson, CHSP, Senior Loss Control Specialist

Did you know that one of the likeliest places to be involved in a fender bender is in a parking lot? According to a study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, parking lot accidents account for more than 20 percent of vehicle crash claims. In addition statistically, post office parking lots usually have the highest incidence of accidents. This is because they have the quickest turnover with vehicles parked often for less than 5 minutes.

Many low speed collisions as well as common scrapes and dings occur in parking lots. While most drivers exercise care when traveling on streets and roads, once they enter a parking lot, they typically become distracted. Drivers seem to suspend their good judgment when looking for a parking spot. Some people consider the traffic signs such as Stop and Yield as optional in parking lots because they are on private property and not subject to a ticket, while others ignore the traffic lanes to cut diagonally across the lot. In addition, when motorists are in a hurry they often stop looking for cross traffic, or assume others will see them coming and automatically stop for them.

In a parking lot, people have their minds on everything but driving. For instance, a driver spots someone with keys in hand approaching their vehicle and their first reaction is to dart forward to be the first to claim the spot, oblivious to the vehicle trying to back out of a space between two vans and... well, you get the idea.

Pedestrians are equally at risk as most parking lots do not have provisions for them which means that they must walk in the traffic lanes, often with small children in tow. Often pedestrians, especially children, are hit by drivers backing out of parking spaces, or negotiating intersections with cross walks.

Often parking lots are poorly marked for proper traffic control, and often many parking lots suffer from little, if any, maintenance. This includes missing stop signs, faded traffic lane stripes, and potholes that make vehicles dodge from side to side. Also, overgrown shrubbery may obscure sight lines at intersections where pedestrians or other cars may appear suddenly.

What can be done to avoid collisions and/or injuries?

Here are a few tips assembled from many sources:

While driving:

- Wear your seatbelt - even low speed collisions can throw you around the cabin of your vehicle.
- Obey traffic signs such as Stop and Yield.
- Drive slowly and use your turn signals and headlights - make sure your vehicle is seen and watch for distracted motorists who do not see you coming.

PARKING LOT DANGERS (continued)

- Obey traffic lanes and avoid cutting diagonally across lots, and watch for vehicles cutting diagonally across lots.
- Be extra careful at entrances and exits - motorists stop suddenly and for no apparent reason - tailgaters often end up in rear-end collisions, and rushing while turning into access road or side street traffic can also lead to collisions.
- Be especially careful in lots that contain Post Offices, package stores and other locations where people are prone to dart in and out hastily in a hurry to be on their way.
- Be extra careful during peak times when reckless drivers may speed through lanes while trying to get a "better spot" closer to a building entrance.
- Some drivers are on the "hunt" for an ideal parking spot and may drive erratically - watching for open spots rather than watching where they are driving! These drivers often circle the lanes nearest to their store - parking away from stores may make a longer walk, but prove less dangerous from a vehicle collision standpoint.
- Watch out for parents pushing baby carriages and strollers - they may assume you are going to stop for them or may not pay attention to cross traffic.

When parking:

- Double check to turn off your headlights before leaving your vehicle.
- Be wary of "runaway" shopping carts - try to avoid parking near cart "corrals".
- Park in well-lit areas and complain to manage-

ment if there are no adequately lit areas available.

- Avoid parking near mini-vans as these vehicles typically carry children who may play on, around, behind or near your commercial vehicle.
- Avoid larger, two-door cars - Vehicles with long doors require greater opening distance for ingress or egress. This can lead to dents on your vehicle or irritated motorists who may perceive you to have parked too closely to their vehicle.
- Keep your distance from the curb - Although you do not want the tail of your vehicle sticking into the lane of travel, there may be other dangers associated with parking too close to the curb. Higher suspensions of commercial vehicles may allow the bumper to hang over walkways causing tripping hazards to pedestrians. Additionally, parking close to the curb during summer months may invite damage from lawn maintenance crews who need to trim, edge and/or clear clippings near the curb.
- Make note of your neighbors - When parking, check the outside edge of your neighbor's doors. Door edges that are littered with chips and scratches may indicate a lack of care or concern for property by the other driver.
- Park beneath lights not trees - Although many people try to park under trees for shade advantages; however, debris that falls out of trees (bird feces, sap, and seeds) can damage your vehicle. Lights, on the other hand provide added security if you happen to be arriving or exiting in the dark.
- Whenever possible, park to avoid

any back up moves. If you must back up, take extra time to look around the vehicle while backing up. If needed, use your horn to catch the attention of others.

When walking to/from your vehicle:

- Have your keys out and ready so that you do not need to linger next to your vehicle where you could be attacked.
- At night, avoid secluded areas to reduce the potential threat of muggings, robbery and the like.
- If possible, during low light conditions (dawn, dusk, night) try to wear light colored clothing so that other motorists can see you easily.
- Watch out for speed bumps and concrete parking blocks that may be covered by fresh snow or rain puddles - these could cause you to trip and fall.
- During inclement weather, ice may not be obvious and you could lose your footing.

When Leaving:

- Walk around your vehicle and check for damages, and check for discarded glass bottles or other materials that could damage your tires as you pull out of the spot.
- Take time to clean away any ice or snow accumulations in the winter so that you can see clearly when driving out of the parking lot.
- Watch for indications that other vehicles are about to leave (i.e. brake lights, exhaust, etc.).
- When backing out of a parking space, be mindful of vehicles and pedestrians moving behind you - if it is safe to do so, backing into a space should make it much easier to see cross traffic and pedestrians

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**We're on the web
www.pasheriffs.org**

**WEAR THE LOGO AND
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Enclosed with your Newsletter is the Official Product Line Catalog for the Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association.

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**HOUSE BILL 466 WOULD REAFFIRM THE
POWERS AND DUTIES OF SHERIFFS AND
DEPUTY SHERIFFS
AND**

we introduced a new website solely for that purpose

Our ongoing efforts to have the powers and authority of Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs reaffirmed and clarified by the Pennsylvania legislature, has resulted in **www.supportpasheriffs.org**

This site is dedicated to once and for all have legislation enacted and passed that will allow Sheriffs and Deputies to do what they have been sworn to do as law enforcement officers: **PROTECT AND SERVE THE PEOPLE OF THEIR COUNTIES.**

You can help by signing our online petition and/or writing your Representatives and Senators. We need to get this bill out of the House Judiciary Committee and on to the floor of the House of Representatives.

Our members are our BEST allies and we need your support today!!!!