

UTAH

NETS

Network Of Employers
For Traffic Safety

Prescription Medications Effecting Safety on the Road

According to a new study released by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 78 percent of drivers over age 55 use one or more medications, yet only 28 percent indicated some awareness of the potential impact on driving performance associated with those medications. Few respondents had received a warning about potentially driver impairing medications from a healthcare professional. Further, the study found that such warnings do not increase with increasing numbers of medications. Previous research indicates that the use of a single potentially driver impairing medication as well as use of multiple medications increases the risk of being in a crash.

With the number of drivers 55 years of age and older expected to increase by more than half by 2030, this issue will only continue to grow unless measures are taken to increase awareness about medications that can impact safe driving.

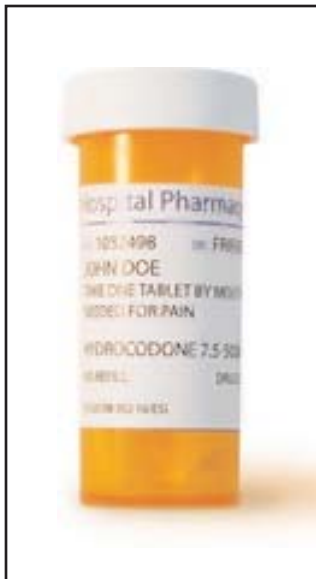
Employers can do their part to help drivers of all ages, especially mature drivers, be attentive to the possible side effects of medications. Are medications addressed in your employee driving contract? Perhaps you might consider encouraging employees to study up on their own, about side effects and options and to contact their health care providers with any questions.

May an employer ask all employees what prescription medications they are taking? New guidelines from the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission address this question. The answer is generally, no. Asking all employees about their use of prescription medications is not job related and consistent with business necessity. In limited circumstances, however, certain employers may be able to demonstrate that it is job-related and consistent with business necessity to require employees in positions affecting public safety to report when they are taking medication that may affect their ability to perform essential functions.

Under these limited circumstances, an employer must be able to demonstrate that an employee's impaired ability to perform essential functions will result in a direct threat. For example, a police department could require armed officers to report when they are taking medications that may affect their ability to use a firearm or to perform other essential functions of their job. Similarly, an airline could require its pilots to

report when they are taking any medications that may impair their ability to fly. A fire department, however, could not require fire department employees who perform only administrative duties to report their use of medications because it is unlikely that one could show that these employees would pose a direct threat as a result of their inability or impaired ability to perform their essential job functions.



School Bus Safety, Do Your Drivers Know the Rules?

For thousands of Utah students, the school day begins and ends with a trip on the school bus. The greatest risk for them is not riding the bus, but approaching or leaving the bus. Utah motorists must abide by the following rules:

Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to stop and load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.

Red flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate that the bus has stopped and that children are in the process of getting on or off. Motorists traveling either direction must stop their cars for red flashing lights, even if there are three or more lanes.

The only time motorists in both directions *don't* have to stop, is when three or more lanes are

separated by a physical barrier or median, or when there are five or more lanes separated by a center turn lane.

When driving in neighborhoods that have school zones, watch out and pay attention for children. Speeding 10 miles per hour over the limit in a school zone can result in a \$168 ticket.

When backing out of any driveway or leaving a garage, check and double check for children that may be behind you - walking or bicycling to school.



Black Ice: What You Can't See Can Hurt You



As early as October, Utah drivers should beware of black ice. Such ice is frozen with little or no air bubbles trapped inside, making it highly transparent. This type of ice appears as the color of the material beneath it, often appearing to be wet asphalt. Because it may be difficult to detect, black ice presents

a significant hazard to automotive traffic and pedestrians.

Auto emissions can cause black ice to form on heavily congested roads. It is also a significant hazard in shaded areas, near ponds or rivers, in tunnels and on overpasses and bridges. No matter the location of your travels, keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front of you. Stopping on ice takes twice as long as it does on a dry road.

If you suspect that an area of road you are traveling on is icy, or if you see cars ahead of

you skidding, shift into a lower gear. Shifting to a lower gear will slow you down and increase your control of the vehicle. If you are already skidding, take your foot off of the accelerator and pump the brakes, rather than slamming on them. Unless your vehicle is equipped with anti-lock brakes, slamming on the breaks will make the skid worse.

Turn into a skid. When you feel your vehicle slipping turn the wheel in the direction the car is skidding rather than against it. This will help regain control of the vehicle and get it back on track.

Free Materials Available

- ▶ Zero Fatalities DVD
- ▶ Parking Lot Signs
- ▶ Buckle Up For Love Posters and Brochures

To request materials or suggest ideas to Utah NETS, contact Jessica Clark, Information Specialist at (801) 478-7878 ext. 303 or e-mail her at jclark@utahsafetycouncil.org.



Driver Fatigue, an Accident Waiting to Happen

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) calculates that drowsy or fatigued driving causes approximately 100,000 police-reported crashes and kills more than 1,550 Americans each year. Sleepiness slows a driver's reaction time and decreases awareness. Drowsiness can also impair a driver's judgment and increases the risks of crashing. Since you don't want these employers contributing to these statistics, here are some tips to help every driver avoid driver fatigue.

- The biggest mistake people make is not stopping when they are tired, thinking they can make it. Drivers should give themselves plenty of time to get to their destinations and schedule in regular breaks.
- For long trips plan in advance so you know where you are going to take a break.
- Take a break at least every 2 hours.
- Plan to stay somewhere overnight if you are going on a long journey and avoid heavy foods.
- If possible, share the driving with a coworker and make sure to take rest when you are not driving.
- Try not to drive when you would normally be asleep (early mornings and late nights).
- Don't drink and drive. Not only does alcohol severely impair your driving ability, but it also acts as a depressant. Just one drink can induce fatigue. Also, avoid smoking when you drive.



Smoke's nicotine and carbon monoxide hamper night vision.

- If there is any doubt about the direction of your headlights, have your headlights properly aimed. Misaimed headlights blind other drivers and reduce your ability to see the road. Being seen is as important as seeing.
- Caffeine (coffee, cola drinks) provides a quick, but short-lived improvement in alertness. So, to capitalize on its benefits, one should use it only when a boost is needed. Drink water, eat fruit and healthy snacks rather than fatty and sugary food.
- If you are taking any medication, check whether it causes drowsiness.
- Use air conditioning to keep you more alert and it will also help avoid frustration and stress.

• A power nap of only twenty minutes can boost energy levels as well as improve your driving skills and alertness.

Look out for these signs when you are driving:

- You keep yawning, day-dreaming, or find yourself weaving in and out of your lane.
- Your reactions unintentionally speeding up or slowing down. Anxiety, mood states, personality and temperament as factors that may possibly affect driver fatigue.
- You feel stiff or your eyes feel heavy.
- You wander over the center line or on to the edge of the road.
- You don't remember driving the last few miles.

Texas Drivers Warned, Zombies Ahead



The Texas Department of Transportation isn't laughing at the ghoulish warning that appeared on an Austin traffic sign earlier this year. A prankster altered electronic signs intended to warn motorists of construction and instead the sign displayed "Zombies Ahead" for several

hours. Recently other states including Utah have experienced similar road sign pranks, which can be easily prevented by locking the signs instrument panel and changing the default password. Before acting on the urge to spread your own message to motorists, be warned that the signs cost roughly \$15,000 each and that tampering with one is a class C misdemeanor. Happy Halloween!





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NETS NEWS

If you would like to submit items for use in the newsletter, send them to:

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To find out how Utah NETS can help your organization, contact Jessica Clark, Information Specialist at (801) 478-7878 ext 303 or (800) 933-5943 ext 303.

Membership is free so sign up today!



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