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# Behind the Wheel at Work



*Behind the Wheel at Work* is a quarterly eNewsletter bringing you the latest news from the NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety.

**Volume 1 Number 2 March 2016**

## Green-light

*Go.* Whether you're doing research or implementing a comprehensive safety program in the workplace, you want to make real progress on the most relevant issues related to motor vehicle safety at work. To help you go forward, we're highlighting targeted motor vehicle safety research and actionable resources in this month's issue of *Behind the Wheel at Work*.

**What motor vehicle safety issues do you want to see discussed in our next newsletter?** Share them with us by emailing [kur4@cdc.gov](mailto:kur4@cdc.gov). Your input may inspire future content for this space!

Missed the first issue of *Behind the Wheel at Work*? [Catch up on Volume 1 Number 1.](#)

### In This Issue

- [Our Priority: Keeping Workers Safe on the Road](#)
- [Safety Tip!](#)
- [Total Worker Health® Approaches to Driving Safety](#)
- [New fact sheet from the NIOSH CMVS!](#)
- [April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month](#)
- [Focus on NIOSH CMVS Researchers](#)
- [Q&A: NETS Executive Director](#)
- [Understanding Causes of Crashes in the Oil and Gas Industry](#)
- [My Car Does What?](#)
- [In the News](#)

## NIOSH CMVS Tweets

Law enforcement officers – follow your agency's standard operating procedure (SOP) on temporary traffic control zon... <https://t.co/QujFiF3pSr>

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## Our Priority: Keeping Workers Safe on the Road




Millions of workers drive or ride in a motor vehicle as part of their jobs. And, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of work-related deaths in U.S. **The type of company or job doesn't matter— the risk is there.**



At the CMVS, what are our priorities? We do research and make crash prevention recommendations for:



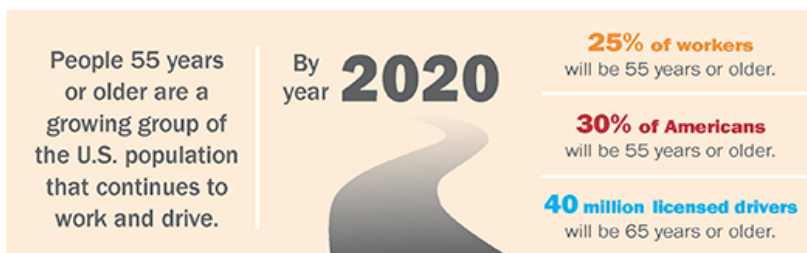
1. Truck drivers
2. High-risk workers, including ambulance, law enforcement, oil and gas extraction
3. All who drive for work, including home healthcare workers, sales representatives, and many others

Interested in learning more about what we do? [View our updated NIOSH CMVS fact sheet](#) .

### Safety Tip for Employers!

Prevent distracted driving—ban texting and hand-held phone use, and consider banning hands-free devices. Require workers to pull over in a safe location if they must text or make a call.

## Driving Safety at Work: Productive Aging and Total Worker Health<sup>®</sup>



Many of us get in a car every single day to get to work, school, run our errands, or do our shopping. It's important to consider how we as workers and employers can keep safe driving in the front of our minds. Although individual drivers will always have a role to play in motor vehicle safety, organizational-level changes in work environments are a more

effective and sustainable means for preventing injury and disability than individual behavior changes. **Taking a Total**

**Worker Health® approach to driver safety means supporting policies that keep workers safe on the road while also promoting lifelong worker health and well-being.** For the aging workforce, this means establishing organizational-level initiatives which encourage safety, health, and well-being across the working life.

Getting started with these approaches can seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Start by learning workers' needs related to motor vehicle safety— this means incorporating their feedback in developing policies, programs, and practices. Engage workers of all ages in the discussion, keeping in mind that skills may vary throughout people's working lives, and that driving ability may be affected by declines in vision or hearing or other factors associated with normal aging.

Ask your workers: are there opportunities to improve their working conditions as they relate to driving? Are schedules and shifts impacting driving safety? Are delivery schedules or timelines realistic? Are meal and rest breaks adequate? Be open to suggestions.

Stress and the distractions that come with it can influence driving, too. **Flexibility can be a key component to improving worker safety. Offering workers control over how and when work is accomplished can help to manage and alleviate job-related stress.**

Managers and supervisors can support and encourage motor vehicle safety by:

- Setting goals together for keeping workers safe while operating motor vehicles.
- Rescheduling or re-routing worker travel if driving conditions become unsafe.
- Giving workers a voice in developing safe driving policies, practices, and training programs.
- Offering training tailored to driving risks faced by workers of all ages.
- Providing workers with general information about the possible side effects of medications and chronic medical conditions on their safe driving.
- Connecting workers with resources to prevent or address chronic conditions that could impact driving. Examples could include: local health fairs; screenings for vision, hearing, or substance abuse challenges; or self-administered sleep and sleep apnea questionnaires.
- Offering telework, flex-time, and other flexible work schedule arrangements. This can assist in not only keeping workers off the road during the most hazardous and stressful times, but also in allowing time for general prevention or management of chronic health conditions.

As workers, first-line supervisors, and managers, we each have a role in making sure that driving during the work day and commuting are planned and carried out safely. By considering your workplace's unique needs and challenges, you can better plan and manage travel for all workers in your organization— helping to keep workers safe, healthy, and well throughout their working life.

**For more information on keeping older drivers in the workplace safe while operating motor vehicles, see the new NIOSH fact sheet, [Older Drivers in the Workplace: How Employers and Workers Can Prevent Crashes](#).** To learn more about integrated approaches to worker safety, health, and well-being, visit the [NIOSH Total Worker Health® Program](#) and the [National Center for Productive Aging and Work](#).

## New fact sheet from the NIOSH CMVS! Older Drivers in the Workplace: How Employers and Workers Can Prevent Crashes

Older workers bring extensive skills, knowledge, and experience to their jobs. But, workers age 55 or older are at a higher risk of dying in a motor vehicle crash at work compared to younger adult workers. This [fact sheet](#) gives employers and workers information on age-related physical and mental changes that may affect older workers' driving. Use the provided checklists that feature action steps and resources to help you, your co-workers, and your employees continue driving safely.

## April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month



Are you taking steps to keep your employees safe before and while driving?

Consider the following recommendations, and visit our [Distracted Driving](#) page for more resources.

**Ban texting and hand-held phone use, and consider banning hands-free phone use.** Using a hands-free device while driving is not necessarily safer. The brain has limited capability to perform two cognitive tasks at once, and driving is the most important task when you're behind the wheel.

**Consider having workers acknowledge that they have read and understand your company's distracted driving-related policies.** Clearly communicate your company's distracted-driving policy to workers. Include information on how distracted driving puts them at risk of a crash, and explain the consequences of violating the policy.

**Provide workers with information to help them talk to their family and friends about the dangers of distracted driving.**

### Focus on NIOSH CMVS Researchers Meet Kyla Retzer, MPH



**Tell us about your role within NIOSH.**

I am an epidemiologist in the Western States Division, am based in Denver, and have been with NIOSH for almost six years. I primarily focus on safety and health issues of workers in the oil and gas extraction industry, and a good portion of my time is spent on motor vehicle safety research.

**Why are motor vehicle crashes an important occupational safety concern for the oil and gas extraction industry?**

### Q&A: NETS Executive Director Meet Jack Hanley



*Jack Hanley is the executive director of the [Network of Employers for Traffic Safety](#) (NETS), a valued partner of the NIOSH CMVS. As executive director, Hanley is responsible for leading NETS' road safety efforts.*



**Road safety affects employers and workers in all industries. What are the cross-cutting road safety issues that your member companies are currently most concerned about?**

Three issues seem to be receiving more attention than others these days: (1) *Distracted driving*, in particular the banning of cell phones altogether vs. the hands-free use

Transportation incidents are the leading cause of death for workers in the oil and gas extraction industry, resulting in 548 worker deaths during 2003-2014; the majority were motor-vehicle related. The driving environment in this industry can be challenging: workers are typically on-duty in 12-hour or longer shifts, and they frequently have long commutes before and after shifts to get to remote well sites. In addition, there are typically fewer safety features (e.g. lighting, guardrails) on these rural roads.

### **What strategies are you using to advance the prevention of crashes in this industry?**

We are working on several projects. First, we have a contract with the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute to evaluate in-vehicle monitoring systems (IVMS) in small well servicing fleets. Second, I am preparing to conduct a field survey of 500 oil and gas workers which contains a motor vehicle component asking workers about their driving habits, history of crashes, company policies, safety culture, and their own safety and health concerns. Third, we are currently developing two fact sheets about Preventing Driver Fatigue in the Oilfield—one for workers, the other for managers.


In 2013, we formed a NORA Oil and Gas Sector Council Motor Vehicle Workgroup that is composed of oil and gas industry partners, OSHA, trade associations, insurance carriers, and NIOSH. The group, which meets twice a year, has been a great way to stay connected with our partners, share research findings, and learn more about challenges industry is facing and about best practices being used, such as implementing IVMS. The group developed a [guide on implementing IVMS](#)  , and it was adopted by the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers.

## **Understanding Causes of Crashes in the Oil and Gas Industry**

Researchers from the NIOSH Oil and Gas Extraction program and the CMVS are working with a range of partners to better understand what causes motor vehicle crashes in the oil and gas extraction industry, which experienced unprecedented workforce and worksite growth during 2003-2013. Much of the work in this industry involves transporting workers, materials, and products by road, and such work takes place in all

debate; (2) Identifying and addressing *high risk occupational driver behaviors*, largely by way of in-vehicle monitoring systems; and (3) Leasing/purchasing vehicles with *collision avoidance technology*. In addition, there are two emerging issues that companies are starting to address. One is *fatigue* (but not limited to drowsy driving) and the other is the use of prescription *pain medications* by occupational drivers.

### **The cost of crashes can be damaging– to worker safety and company budgets. What are some of the biggest crash-related costs, and how can implementing a safety program help employers lessen the impact?**

With regard to occupational drivers, crashes associated with backing and parking—slow speed, almost always non-injury events—and rear-end collisions are the most common, and, in the aggregate, represent a meaningful cost to the company. These crashes can be mitigated through training and by the use of collision avoidance technology and backup cameras, for example. But it can't stop there. There also are crashes that occur rarely but that result in huge costs—financial and reputational. Thus, responsible companies need to develop and implement *comprehensive* fleet safety programs and policies. These policies and programs range from seat belt usage to driver training, post-crash review practices, high-risk driver identification and many others. To this end, I recommend [NETS' Comprehensive Guide to Road Safety™](#) . It's a free toolkit available at [trafficsafety.org](https://trafficsafety.org) that provides detailed guidance on starting or improving an occupational driver road safety program.

### **What first steps can employers take to prevent traffic crashes that occur on the job?**

The first step is for executive leadership to recognize occupational road safety merits its attention and resourcing. The second is for leadership to make road safety an integral part of the company's safety culture. This gives road safety a home, a context, and a place at the table. The third step is for leadership to create a road safety role. This individual is charged with developing, implementing and leading the company's on the job road safety program.





extremes of weather and road conditions. As many oil and gas worksites are in remote areas, workers often have to drive long distances from their homes to reach drilling sites and get from worksite to worksite.

Our research suggests that half the oil and gas workers who died in motor vehicle crashes were not wearing a seat belt. This same study reported that more than half the workers who died were occupants of light-duty vehicles—primarily pickup trucks, and that fatality risk was highest among well-servicing companies and companies with fewer than 20 employees. NIOSH shared this information, along with recommendations for prevention, with employers and other stakeholders in the form of [a video to promote seat belt use](#), and numerous articles in trade journals and presentations at industry conferences.


At the same time, NIOSH recognized that the information available on workplace deaths involving oil and gas extraction didn't identify all the workers who are at risk. Why? A large number of workers on oil and gas drilling sites aren't directly hired by oil and gas companies— they're contractors doing tasks such as hauling water, building well pads, or surveying new sites.

NIOSH also recognized that although deaths while commuting to or from work generally aren't classified as work-related, long commutes combined with long hours and shift work created a special risk for oil and gas workers. To provide a more complete picture of deaths linked to work in oil and gas extraction, NIOSH researchers developed a database called [Fatalities in Oil and Gas \(FOG\)](#), which includes deaths of workers not directly employed by oil and gas companies, as well as deaths that occur during long-distance commutes.

FOG receives reports from sources such as OSHA, the media, and industry partners. Motor vehicle crash information from FOG will help NIOSH respond more quickly to emerging risks and ensure that prevention recommendations focus on what is putting workers at risk.

Building a program can appear to be daunting but doesn't have to be. There are many resources available to companies keen on building a road safety program. Start by benchmarking your own company for its promising road safety practices, benchmark companies with proven road safety blueprints, and use free resources available from NETS, NIOSH, the National Safety Council, and NHTSA, as examples. Look, too, to the provider of your leased vehicles for assistance. As the program develops, NETS' annual [STRENGTH IN NUMBERS® Fleet Safety Benchmark Program](#)   provides the opportunity to accelerate improvement through NETS' annual benchmark exercise and the year-round commitment NETS' members have to collaborative problem solving and sharing of best practices.

### **Why should employers invest time to improve off-the-job traffic safety?**

It is important to keep in mind that, in most cases, occupational drivers are a small subset of an employer's total workforce. In fact, NETS recently published a report showing that the costs of off-the-job crashes are almost equal to the cost of on-the-job crashes. That same report — [The Costs of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers, 2015™](#)  —also provides data showing that vehicle crash-related off-the-job *lost work days* exceed on-the-job lost work days by an order of magnitude. Clearly, employers should pay attention to the road safety of *all* their employees. Key off-the-job focus areas include seat belt usage, speeding, distracted driving and drinking and driving.

## My Car Does What?

How to make safer, more knowledgeable drivers.



The CMVS recently authored a guest blog post for [MyCarDoesWhat.org](https://mycarseats.org/), a free interactive tool from the National Safety Council and the University of Iowa that answers drivers' questions about advanced safety features in vehicles. **If you are an employer, how are you working to improve the safety of your fleet, keep employees and their families safe on the road, and create more knowledgeable drivers?**

Take our True/False quiz to check your safety feature know-how, and [read our blog post for employers](#) to learn more about keeping your drivers safe—on and off the job.

### TRUE/FALSE QUIZ



This icon represents Automatic Emergency Braking gradually to maintain a safe following distance complete stop—to keep you from hitting the

True

False

### In the News

[Unrealistic deadlines lead to risky behaviors among long-haul truckers: survey](#)

[NIOSH national survey of long-haul truck drivers: Injury and safety](#)

[NIOSH newsletter revisits truck driver survey data](#)

[NIOSH study reveals safety issues in long-haul trucking industry](#)

[NIOSH describes safety risks facing long-haul truckers](#)

[NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety older driver fact sheet](#)

[Employers: How to make safer, more knowledgeable drivers— on and off the job](#)

Please send your comments and suggestions to us at [kur4@cdc.gov](mailto:kur4@cdc.gov).

## Subscribe to Behind the Wheel at Work

Enter your email address to receive research updates, links to motor vehicle safety resources, practical tips on workplace driving, and news about upcoming events.

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