

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 5 December 2016

2016 road safety review

Back to the future. Many thanks to our readers who voted for a year-in-review theme! We're excited to share this issue of *Behind the Wheel at Work*, which highlights not only what has been done recently in the field of motor vehicle safety — but also where it seems to be heading in the upcoming year.

Rewind. Catch up on [Volume 1 Number 4 of the newsletter](#), which includes educational resources to help you reassess your motor vehicle safety program and get inspired.

What motor vehicle topic did you find most interesting in 2016? Share your thoughts by emailing kur4@cdc.gov.

In this issue

[The road ahead](#)

[Safety tip!](#)

[CMVS Assistant Coordinator](#)

[NIOSH + law enforcement](#)

[NIOSH CMVS Researcher](#)

[How to find/interpret crash data](#)

[New NIOSH infographic](#)

[Traffic safety marketing resources](#)

[In the news](#)

NIOSH CMVS Tweets

Any business whose employees drive during work hours should have a motor vehicle safety program in place. Here are... <https://t.co/1mWQ7nv4NO>

RT @NETS_RoadSafety : NETS keynote presenters announced for annual #StrengthINNumbers Fleet Safety Benchmark Conference! Register today a... <https://t.co/Y3T9MavMq9>

NEW issue of Behind the Wheel at Work | 10 Actions to Protect Drivers at Work: <https://t.co/UZ5RZq2gdn> #safety... <https://t.co/U8WBpdPZU8>

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The road ahead: Using your input to guide our direction



The NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety is excited for the road ahead. We are now halfway through our [5-year strategic plan](#) and spent this year conducting a midcourse review to demonstrate progress made since the plan's start in 2014. That process involved internal and public input from those – like you – who value the future of motor vehicle safety. We believe the assessment will facilitate growth in existing research areas of strength and has helped us identify those of potential strength. That translates to more practical knowledge for the road safety community.

In 2017, we plan to extend this process by improving our understanding of the Center's target audience: employers. How? Focus groups will help us learn what topics, formats, and channels employers prefer when receiving and sharing safety information.

Stay tuned for more on our journey! And remember, **we always value reader feedback** as we want to tailor this newsletter's content to your interests.

Safety tip for employers!

Consider providing your drivers with an emergency kit that includes a flashlight, extra batteries, flares, blanket, and bottled water.

NIOSH names CMVS Assistant Coordinator



The NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety recently added a new member to its leadership. Kyla Retzer, MPH is an epidemiologist in NIOSH's Western States Division and has been with the Institute for almost six years, primarily focusing on safety and health issues of workers in the oil and gas extraction industry. Motor vehicle safety research comprises a good portion of her time.

As the CMVS assistant coordinator, Kyla joins Dr. Stephanie Pratt (Manager) and Dr. Rosa L. Rodríguez-Acosta (Coordinator) in leading NIOSH efforts to keep workers safe on the road.

"As a researcher, Kyla has made significant contributions to the Center through her studies of motor vehicle crashes among oil and gas extraction workers and her engagement with key partners in the industry," says Dr. Pratt. "We are looking forward to benefitting from her experience and insight as she takes on this expanded role within the Center."

Read [Kyla's Q&A](#) from a previous issue of *Behind the Wheel at Work*.

How NIOSH is preventing crashes among law enforcement officers



Law enforcement remains a dangerous occupation. The greatest risks facing officers are homicides, suicides, and motor-vehicle deaths. So far in 2016, [133 officers have died while on-duty and 40% of those deaths have been motor-vehicle related](#) [↗](#).

Recognizing this significant risk to the safety of those who risk their lives daily to protect our communities, NIOSH developed a multi-faceted program of research and outreach to prevent motor vehicle crashes among law enforcement officers (LEOs).

NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety research on LEO motor vehicle safety uses several approaches.

- A [statewide survey of LEOs and police departments](#) [📄](#) revealed that in the past 3 years, 20% of officers were involved in at least one crash and 16% had been struck (or nearly struck) while working along roadways. This study also found that although 82% of departments had policies that required officers to wear a seat belt, less than half had policies restricting cell phone use and less than a third had speed restrictions when officers were responding using lights and siren. LEOs also reported perceived deficits in academy training as well as on-going training related to safe law enforcement vehicle operations.
- Building on survey findings, NIOSH researchers conducted a multi-year **evaluation of a comprehensive motor vehicle safety program** in a large metropolitan police department. Preliminary results found that program implementation was associated with a statistically significant decline in motor vehicle crash and injury rates. These declines were not found in

the two control agencies during the same time period. Behavioral changes were also found. The percentage of officers wearing seatbelts in crashes significantly increased after the program was implemented.

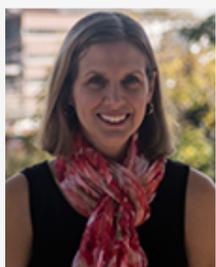
- To better understand the immediate risk factors and circumstances of officer-involved crashes, NIOSH also began **on-scene investigations** that will lead to concrete fatality-prevention recommendations for agencies. Both these initiatives – the program evaluation and the crash investigations – are being carried out with support from the National Institute of Justice.

The CMVS program for LEO motor vehicle safety has used a variety of channels to increase crash risk awareness among police departments, LEOs, and the research community. Outreach activities include a [web page](#), articles in law enforcement trade journals, presentations at conferences attended by leaders in the law enforcement community, and a [one-page flyer](#) with safety information for front-line LEOs.

For more in-depth information on motor vehicle safety risks for LEOs, read the “NIOSH CMVS Researcher” Q&A with Dr. Hope Tiesman below.

Focus on NIOSH CMVS Researchers

Meet Hope Tiesman, PhD



How would you describe your work at NIOSH?

I'm a research epidemiologist at NIOSH. I study how to prevent and control work-related injuries, specifically related to law enforcement. Most criminology research

in this field has been outward-focused – *how do cops make communities safer?* I also want cops to ask, *how do we make ourselves safer?*

Why is motor vehicle safety an important occupational safety issue for law enforcement?

Recently, national media coverage of law enforcement has focused on use-of-force incidents. So far this year, there have been 52 firearms-related officer deaths. Most years, however, motor vehicle-related incidents are the main cause of death for officers. This year is an anomaly in that motor vehicle-related deaths are second (46 deaths) to firearms. But the number is still high, and nobody's talking about it.

Why? I don't think it's different than how most of us think about the dangers of driving. People fear flying, but they don't fear driving to the airport. Yet, the risks of dying in a motor vehicle crash are much greater than dying in a plane crash. This thinking extends to cops. They feel safe in their patrol cars; it's when they get out of their cars that they become nervous.

A cop once told me about the time he was responding to a domestic violence scene. While driving, he was thinking about his tactical response: what he would find when he arrived at the scene, etc. The officer was driving around 115 miles per hour at night down a gravel road in a rural area. He wasn't wearing a seat belt. Realizing this was a moment for him. He stopped the car and thought, *what are you doing?* He was thinking about what was going to happen when he arrived, not how safe he was in getting there.

The media's emphasis on firearms-related deaths of cops shouldn't change how important it is to prevent motor vehicle crashes. These crashes are preventable. Of course, there are times that cops have to drive fast – even at night and in bad weather. All of their decisions are tied to response time.

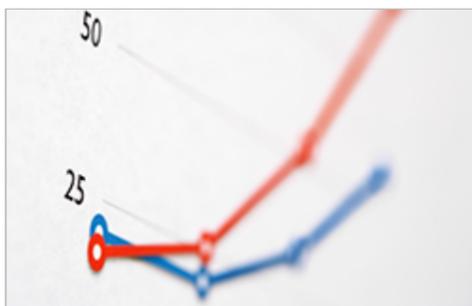
Tell us about your current projects.

I approached the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) after learning about their state-of-the-art motor vehicle safety program. The LVMPD experienced 3 fatal crashes that became a call to action to transform the agency's motor vehicle safety culture. They changed policies, the way they trained officers, and how they talked about safe driving.

With funding assistance from the National Institute of Justice, NIOSH conducted a study to determine if the LVMPD program really was effective. Our preliminary results show that it had a strong impact on decreasing injury and crash rates. Because similar changes were not seen in two departments we compared to the LVMPD, we believe this is evidence that the improvements in Vegas are the result of their program and not necessarily a trend in the law enforcement community as a whole.

We have two new projects, one of which I'm serving as subject matter expert to evaluate a Bureau of Justice Assistance training program designed to enhance officer safety – including motor vehicle safety, wellness, and resiliency. The other is the development of a survey to ask officers specific questions about all types of on-duty injuries, including motor vehicle crashes.

How do I find and interpret motor vehicle crash data? Part 1



General information on motor vehicle crashes and driving risks can help you make the case for more program resources or compare your organization to state or national data. Readers asked NIOSH for help in finding national or state statistics on motor vehicle crashes and related topics. Although most of this information focuses on fatal crashes and is not available specifically for workplace driving, it can still be a powerful tool.

In this issue, we're featuring three types of resources from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): [Traffic Safety Fact Sheets](#), [Research Notes](#), and [Crash*Stats](#). We encourage readers to browse through all three series of NHTSA reports highlighted here, and to contact us for further information.

What kinds of questions can these resources help you answer? Let's say you're expanding your business from Colorado into Utah and Wyoming, and you want to know whether there's anything in the Utah and Wyoming statistics to indicate that your motor vehicle safety program should focus on particular risks for your drivers in those locations.

Here's just a sample of what you can learn and how you might interpret these data.

From [2014 Traffic Safety Fact Sheet STATE TRAFFIC DATA](#):

- **Data:** While traffic deaths in Colorado stayed about the same in 2014 as they were in 2013, they increased 16% in Utah and 72% in Wyoming over the same period, and Wyoming's fatality rate based on miles driven was 1.6 times that for Colorado.
- **Action:** If program resources are limited, consider intensive programmatic efforts in Wyoming.

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- **Data:** Although alcohol was involved in a low percentage of fatal crashes in Utah in 2014 (22%), this represented an 85% increase from 2013.
- **Action:** Recent dramatic increases in alcohol-related traffic deaths in Utah suggest the need for employers to incorporate drunk-driving awareness into driver training and education and to avoid driving during higher-risk nighttime hours.

From [Seat Belt Use in 2015 – Use Rates in the States and Territories](#) :

- **Data:** Like Colorado (82.4%), seat belt use in Utah (83.4%) and Wyoming (79.2%) is below the national average of 87%.
- **Action:** None of these states has a primary-enforcement law that allows police to stop a driver solely for not wearing a seat belt. In states without primary enforcement, employer policies requiring workers to wear a seat belt at all times are especially important.

From [2014 Traffic Safety Fact Sheet Rural/Urban Comparison](#) :

- **Data:** In Wyoming, 81% of traffic deaths in 2014 occurred in rural areas, while Colorado and Utah were both slightly below the national average of 51%.
- **Action:** In developing journey management plans for frequently-traveled routes, consider reducing driving at night and in bad weather, have an emergency communication plan, and put measures in place to manage fatigue (e.g., avoid having workers drive alone, set rules for maximum hours of driving).

From [Distracted Driving 2014](#) :

- **Data:** Nationally, in 2014, 10% of all fatal crashes and 18% of all crashes in which a person was injured involved a distracted driver.
- **Action:** Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming all ban texting while driving, but they place few restrictions on use of cell phones while driving. National data on the role of distraction in fatal and serious crashes support the need for employer policies that ban the use of cell phones by employee drivers.

From [Estimating Lives Saved by Electronic Stability Control, 2010-2014](#) :

- **Data:** Nationwide, electronic stability control (ESC) technology in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 1,580 lives in 2014.
- **Action:** ESC has been required on all new passenger vehicles sold in the United States since model year 2012. Employers may consider replacing older fleet vehicles to take advantage of this lifesaving technology.

New NIOSH infographic



The NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety recently released our first infographic, inspired by our goal to make sure that those who work in or near vehicles come home safely at the end of their workday.

Titled “Keep workers safe on the road,” the infographic answers the question: **Why does workplace motor vehicle safety matter?**

Content covers the human and economic impact of work-related crashes, making the infographic a useful resource for HR or safety professionals to make a business case for a motor vehicle safety program in the workplace.

[Download the infographic](#) .

Free traffic safety marketing resources

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers free online marketing resources. Implementing ready-made campaigns that communicate road safety information in an engaging format can be an effective way to promote positive behaviors behind the wheel – a change that can also reach workers’ family and friends. [Get materials](#)  in English and Spanish for campaigns including speed prevention, seat belts, distracted driving, and more.

In the news

[Latest ‘Business Pulse’ from CDC Foundation addresses motor vehicle safety](#) 

[IACP Quick Take: How Las Vegas Metro PD changed its officers’ driving habits and culture](#) 

prevention, seat belts, distracted driving, and more.

NHTSA's [2017 Communications Calendar](#)   is also a go-to planning resource for discovering when specific traffic safety campaigns are observed throughout the year. **What road safety marketing resources do you need?** Email requests to kur4@cdc.gov. You may inspire a future NIOSH product!



Please send your comments and suggestions to us at kur4@cdc.gov.

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

[What's this?](#)