

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

DriveSharp™

The AAA Foundation collaborated with Posit Science to help promote DriveSharp, a new computer-based training exercise scientifically proven to help reduce the risk of at fault crashes and extend the safe driving life of seniors. This interactive software uses exercises to help drivers improve factors vital to being a safe driver, such as, divided attention, reaction time and useful field of view. The Foundation endorsed DriveSharp as well as helped coordinate public outreach with AAA clubs for a mid-July product launch. Additional support came from the jointly branded DriveSharpNow.com - that contains educational information, a brief test to evaluate seniors' skills and a product demo. With the number of senior drivers 55 and older expected to increase by more than half, improving senior driver safety is an issue that must be addressed. The DriveSharp microsite can be accessed from AAAseniors.com as well as the AAA Foundation's SeniorDrivers.org.

Driver Licensing Policies and Practices: Gearing Up for an Aging Population

This project compiled current driver license policies and practices across the country for improving safety for older and medically at-risk drivers into a single online resource. Additional detail was gathered on promising or innovative programs and activities that might be replicated elsewhere. This searchable database (<http://lpp.seniordrivers.org/lpp/>) is designed for driver licensing officials, policy makers, aging services providers, researchers, and media personnel, as well as older adults and their families. For example, licensing officials are able to identify promising approaches in areas of license renewal requirements, examiner and staff training, driver screening and assessment, driver medical review, reporting of at-risk drivers, assistance with mobility options, and public education and awareness.

Medication Use and Motor Vehicle Collisions among Older Drivers

Many medications commonly used by seniors have potential side effects that can affect driving performance. This project surveyed drivers about their awareness of this problem for both prescription and over the counter medications. The study yielded new information about knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors of people age 55 and over with respect to medications and driving. Released in August and available at AAAFoundation.org, the results were designed to encourage physicians, pharmacists, and family members to do a better job of communicating the potential driving-related risks associated with medications to older drivers.

usRAP

To make the highway system safe, decision-makers need to be able to identify safety risks and match them up with remedies that are known to save lives. In 2004, the Foundation initiated a pilot project in Iowa and Michigan to explore the technical and political feasibility of adapting the European Road Assessment Program (EuroRAP) in the United States. That pilot, known as usRAP, benchmarks and rates the relative risks of roads using metrics that incorporate historical crash data and safety-relevant roadway inventory data. In 2006, a feasibility assessment and report on the initial two-state pilot project was published. In 2008, under Phase II additional work was completed in Florida and New Jersey. Phase III, currently underway in Illinois, Kentucky, New Mexico, and Utah, includes continued work on developing risk maps based on historical crash data and further research into the development and refinement of a "star rating" protocol to rate the relative risk of roads based on their design and safety features. Following completion of Phase III and pending ongoing discussions with Navteq and other development activities, we expect to transition into nationwide implementation usRAP. Outreach projects are underway in Utah and Genesee County, MI that will gauge consumer responses to usRAP maps. For more information visit www.usRAP.us.



Saving lives
through research
and education



Assessing Safety Culture Through Periodic Public Surveys

In 2006, the AAA Foundation began a new research initiative to address safety culture in the United States, specifically focusing on public attitudes toward traffic safety. The goals of this initiative are to describe, to measure, and most importantly, to change attitudes--and eventually, behaviors--related to traffic safety. As a first step, the AAA Foundation began conducting periodic surveys of the American public to assess knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors relevant to traffic safety, and track them over time. Our first wave of telephone surveys of the American public--covering 2,500 U.S. adults--was completed in January 2008. For detailed information about the study methodology and top-level findings, please see our report 2008 Traffic Safety Culture Index, at www.aaafoundation.org/reports. The Foundation's 2009 survey was just recently completed and partially findings were released in July 2009. Additional findings will be released later this year.

The Psychological Foundations of Traffic Safety Culture

This project is working to adapt a risk awareness theory to traffic safety, which Decision Research originally developed and has applied successfully to other social problems such as smoking. Through a case study of cell phone use while driving, this study will investigate the applicability of this theory to traffic safety issues. Specifically, this study will investigate the relationship between teens' attitudes and behaviors and their degrees of "knowledge" and "awareness" of the risks related to using a cell phone while driving. This study is being conducted by Dr. Joshua Weller and colleagues, including Dr. Paul Slovic, at Decision Research.

Parents and Teens: Learning to Drive

This study was designed to learn more about how parents interact with their teens during driving practice when teens are first learning to drive, and then use this information to develop materials to help parents be effective mentors for their teens. Using a series of in-depth interviews with parents as well as DriveCam in-vehicle cameras, this study examined the interaction between parents and their teens during their teens' first days, weeks, and months of learning to drive. The study also monitored a subset of these teens during the first six months after they obtained their provisional license and began driving without supervision, providing a first-of-its-kind opportunity to study their driving behaviors. As a bonus, this study has produced invaluable video footage of newly-licensed teens. As such, it will directly support AAA's teen safety initiatives such as Dare to Prepare, Checkpoints, and Teaching Your Teens to Drive, among others. Preliminary findings are being reviewed and the plan is to release complete findings later this year in collaboration with AAA National's launch of its new teen driver website.

Measuring Changes in Teen Driver Behavior & Understanding During the Early Months of Driving

Despite the widespread implementation of graduated licensing systems, teen driver crash rates continue to be much higher than those among drivers with several years experience. Until we better understand the kinds of mistakes they make during the critical first months of driving, we have insufficient guidance on how to refine programs that will reduce teen crashes need to address. Specifically, this study will document how the nature of crashes changes as new drivers gain increasing amounts of experience, with the goal of identifying the factors that underlie the sharp declines in crash risk during the first 18 months of driving. Results should help guide future efforts to develop driver training approaches and reduce the high crash rates among teenage drivers. Findings are not expected to be ready for release until 2010.

Evaluation New Jersey's GDL System: A Model for a Nation?

Graduated driver licensing systems have significantly reduced the number of crashes involving young drivers; however, the great majority of available evidence applies primarily to the crash rates of 16-year-olds. There have been many studies of state GDL systems, but New Jersey remains virtually unexamined. New Jersey is unique as it is the only state with a licensing age of 17 and the New Jersey GDL system restrictions on nighttime driving and carrying passengers applies to all novice drivers under the age 21 for their first year of driving. Surface-level examinations of fatal crashes before and after the enactment of New Jersey's GDL program have found promising results with respect to fatal crashes of 16-, 17-, and 18-year-old drivers; however, this needs to be confirmed with more in-depth research that includes more data on injury crashes as well as fatal crashes, especially with regard to older teens. If New Jersey's GDL system is shown to be effective not only for 16- and 17-year-old teens but also for older teens, this would suggest that New Jersey may indeed be a good model for other states to follow.

