Workplace safety should encompass the roads staff travel daily

BY DAVID BROWN

P

robably because it has become such an un-

avoidable, everyday part of life, many people
tend to forget driving a car is an extremely complicated and thoroughly dangerous activ-

ity.

Each year thousands of Canadians are killed and hun-
dreds of thousands more injured while on the road. Sending em-
ploees out onto the roads is a risky proposition and as the

Canada Safety Council (CSC) warns, "If you have company

vehicles, you will have collisions.

In Ontario in 1999, lost time due to transportation ac-

cidents represented 2.8 per cent of all claims accepted by the

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Fewer than those for ex-
pense to harmful substances at 4.4 per cent, but more than as-

saults and violent acts at 1.5 per cent. In Alberta in 1998, motor

vehicle accidents accounted for more than $25 million in injury

claims.

The obvious costs of workers’ compensation and in-

surance deductibles that arise when an employee is in an ac-
cident, there are secondary costs that come with a lost-time inci-

dent, like decreased productivity and hiring and training a replace-

ment.

It would be impossible to pro-
tect travelling employees from every possible danger on the road, there are just too many un-

controllable variables, but re-

search has proven driver im-

provement programs can reduce
driver error and mitigate bad habits like speeding or aggressive

driving.

According to Alberta collision data, for every car accident

there are several others that are not reported. The CSC warns that
it is reasonable to assume that for every 10 collisions there are

2 which are not reported. The CSC urges drivers to report all

incidents to insurance companies and to police.

Types of distractions causing accidents

A May 2001 report by the American Automobile Association

identified driver distraction as the cause of nine per cent of severe

or fatal crashes, with the types of distractions as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distraction</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texting</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting the radio</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making phone calls</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>野着 the controls</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating or drinking</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a cell phone</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Automobile Association

What's the point in speeding?

One German study examined just how much time was saved by speed-
ing and at what risk. One driver was told to get to the destination as quickly as possible and the other driver was told to avoid risk, and move as traffic permitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Fast Driver</th>
<th>Slow Driver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,800 km</td>
<td>1,800 km</td>
<td>1,800 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>20 hours, 12 minutes</td>
<td>20 hours, 43 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time saved</td>
<td>31 minutes</td>
<td>54 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles passed</td>
<td>2,004</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used brakes</td>
<td>13,390 times</td>
<td>942 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used brakes</td>
<td>135 times</td>
<td>492 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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