

# health Issues

...in the workplace



Check out the newly updated Windsor-Essex County Health Unit website at [www.wehealthunit.org](http://www.wehealthunit.org) for information relevant to your workplace (see Healthy Workplaces).

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PART OF THE WORKING TOWARD WELLNESS  
WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM



## CHANGING ATTITUDES TO BECOME SAFER DRIVERS

Ontario is currently home to more than 8.3 million licensed drivers and more than 7.2 million registered motor vehicles. The 2001 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report showed that in Windsor-Essex County alone, there was 249,743 registered motor vehicles. That adds up to about 1 vehicle for every person over 15 years of age and these numbers are growing.

Transport Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation address road safety issues by creating programs to deal with lack of seat belt use, improper use of child car restraints, drinking and driving, speeding, driver inattention, driver fatigue, aggressive driving and sharing the road with large commercial vehicles. On Ontario roads in 2001, these safety issues led to approximately 240,000 collisions and 845 deaths. Locally, Windsor-Essex County reported 7,494 collisions and 16 deaths in 2001.

The municipal and provincial governments, local law enforcement agencies, community agencies and car companies are all working to reduce traffic collisions by improving roadways, enforcing laws, organizing public education/awareness campaigns and designing safer vehicles. Although there has been progress, ultimately road user safety is the responsibility of the driver. Attitudes and behaviours toward driving greatly affect the number of traffic collisions. Research shows that while motorists are aware of the causes of traffic collisions, they have no personal attachment. Basically, drivers feel that traffic collisions won't happen to them. Many individuals believe they are good drivers while being critical of the ability of others to drive safely. For example, a 2002 Ontario survey reported that Ontario's drivers believe aggressive driving is a safety concern, yet 92% of drivers surveyed admitted to committing at least one act of aggressive driving in the past year.

A major requirement to reducing traffic collisions is to change individual attitudes and behaviours about driving. For this to happen, drivers need to make the decision and commitment to change some of their driving habits. Drivers also need to think about the consequences of their actions. Drivers need to consider all the costs associated with dangerous driving habits, such as liability, financial implications and personal losses. A traffic collision results in a greater chance for fines, charges, license suspensions, higher insurance premiums and vehicle repairs. As well, a traffic collision could result in a jail sentence, loss of a loved



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one, loss of another person or the driver's own death. Drivers need to realize that traffic collisions can affect many people, not just those involved.

Locally, workplaces can play an important role to help increase road safety. Employers and employees can support positive behaviours by promoting safe driving habits both on and off work time. They can also develop and implement safe driving policies that increase the likelihood that their employees will not contribute to, or become, an unsafe driving statistic.

spring 2003

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## CELL PHONES AND DRIVING DON'T MIX

To date, Canada is estimated to have 9 million wireless or cell phones, many of these are used in motor vehicles. A cell phone can be useful as a safety aid (i.e. calling in case of an emergency) but they should not become a driving distraction. Drivers need to avoid using their cell phones altogether while driving. Even hands-off cell phones can be a distraction. Chances are, if you're engaged in a conversation you're not giving driving the 100% of your attention that it requires.

Consider the following:

- If you are a new cell phone user, refer to the manual. Make sure you are familiar with the features before taking it with you on the road.
- If you need to use your cell phone, pull over to the side of the road safely before using it. Taking your hands off the wheel to use your cell phone is dangerous and puts you at a higher risk of being involved in a collision.
- Shut your phone off and keep it in a compartment that you don't have access to while you are driving. That way you won't be tempted to use it.
- Develop or encourage your organization to develop a policy that prohibits the use of cell phones while driving on company time.

*Remember: Focus on the task of driving!*

There are a number of municipalities in the United States that have implemented laws forbidding drivers from using hand-held cell phones while they are driving. Also on the rise in the US is the number of businesses with policies forbidding employees to use cell phones while driving. In December 2002, Newfoundland and Labrador became the first Canadian jurisdiction to ban the use of hand-held cell phones while driving. Other provinces, including Ontario and Nova Scotia, are looking into a similar law.

## WAKE UP DRIVERS

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation classifies driving while fatigued as a form of impairment. In fact, Ontario statistics show that fatigue is a factor in 35% of motor vehicle crashes. There are many reasons for driver fatigue, such as driving at a time when you would normally be asleep, working long or staggered shifts, working long hours for a period of two weeks or more, or a pattern of irregular sleep before driving.

Shift work is a major reality for the workforce in Windsor and Essex County because of the large number of workplaces that operate around the clock. This, in turn, may increase the number of fatigued drivers on the road. Fatigue reduces a driver's awareness and ability to react quickly and function properly. Driver fatigue can range from a momentary loss of concentration to longer lasting tiredness or sleepiness, which can result in serious, even life threatening, consequences.

### Symptoms vary among drivers but may include:

- Decreased ability to judge your own level of tiredness
- Frequent yawning
- Slowed reactions
- Heavy eyes and stiff joints
- Day dreaming
- Wandering over the centre line or off the road

### Tips to help reduce fatigue:

- Get enough sleep (6-8 hours for most adults)
- Avoid medications that can impair your driving ability
- Stop to rest every two hours and plan ahead where those stops will be
- Keep vehicle temperatures cool, keep your eyes moving and check the mirrors often to help keep you alert
- Don't rely on caffeine-type drinks. They provide short term relief, however, if you are seriously sleep deprived, no amount of caffeine will help
- If you can help it, try not to drive during the peak drowsy times: 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- Eat a healthy diet, be physically active and manage your stress, all of which will improve your energy level
- Share the driving
- Stop at a safe place and take a nap (e.g. a rest station)



# KISS 'N RIDE!

## KISS 'N RIDE!

Kiss 'n Ride is an original program designed to address student safety and morning traffic congestion at schools. The program brings principals, parents, police and traffic engineers together to identify safe drop off zones at each individual school. While parents remain in their cars, volunteers safely escort children to a designated area. This system allows for a convenient and safe drop-off 15-20 minutes before the morning school bell and helps to relieve traffic congestion.

We often think that our children are equipped to handle traffic situations when they have learned and can repeat safety rules. However:

- Children in Kindergarten to Grade 3 have difficulty imagining that there is a need to assess traffic because in their minds the world is there to serve them.
- Walking and negotiating traffic with young children may improve their traffic skills when they are older.
- Children perceive wider streets as dangerous and narrower streets as safe.
- Children perceive that bigger cars travel faster than smaller cars.
- There are many judgment skills needed to cross a street safely. Until children are about 8 years of age it is difficult for them to assess if a car or bus is even moving.
- In a car-pedestrian collision, children, because of their small stature, tend to be pulled under the car, resulting in more serious injuries; adults on the other hand, are more often thrown over the top of the car.
- Because of their short stature and lower eye levels, a child's field of vision is easily obstructed by parked cars, utility poles, newspaper stands, real estate signs, etc.
- Children's peripheral vision is not fully developed; they are easily distracted when trying to assess traffic.
- Most pedestrian traffic injuries happen to 5-9 year olds at mid block crossing, and to 10-14 year olds at intersections.

The Kiss 'n Ride program is available to all schools thanks to the long-term financial commitment of Windsor and Essex County Optimist Clubs.

*For more information contact Heather Wilson, Public Health Nurse, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 258-2146 x 1267.*



## DEMERIT POINT SYSTEM IN ONTARIO

If a licensed driver commits a traffic violation, they risk being charged and fined as well as receiving demerit points against their license. Fully licensed drivers who accumulate 15 demerits points will be suspended for 30 days. Once the suspension is over, the demerit points will drop to 7, which will remain on your driving record for two years.

*The following are examples of traffic violations with the assigned demerit points:*

### Points Traffic Violation

- 7** Failing to stop for a police officer  
Failing to remain at the scene of a collision
- 6** Careless driving  
Racing  
Exceeding the speed limit by 50km/h or more
- 5** Driver of a bus failing to stop at an unprotected crossing
- 4** Exceeding the speed limit by 30 to 49 km/h  
Following too closely
- 3** Driving through, around or under a railway crossing barrier  
Exceeding the speed limit by 16 to 29 km/h  
Failing to obey directions of a police officer

### Points Traffic Violation

- 3** Failing to report a traffic collision to police  
Crowding the driver's seat  
Going the wrong way on a one-way road
- 2** Failing to lower headlight beam  
Improper opening of vehicle door  
Prohibited turns  
Failing to signal  
Failing to stop at a pedestrian crossing  
Driver failing to wear seat belt  
Driver failing to ensure passengers under 16 years are wearing a seat belt

# GET THE WORD OUT



## TWO FEET AND A HEART BEAT PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Going for a walk is a great way to explore your neighbourhood, fit some exercise into your day, and make a positive impact on the air quality of your community! But walking along roads, especially busy roads, is not without risk. Here are some important safety tips to keep in mind:

- Look both ways before crossing the road
- Cross the road at designated crossings (e.g. crosswalks, traffic lights)
- Pick routes in areas with sidewalks
- Walk facing traffic as far as possible from the traveled part of the road when there are no sidewalks along your route
- Wear clothing that reflects light so cars can see you walking after dark
- Stop, look and LISTEN at all train tracks

When teaching kids about pedestrian safety, it's a good idea to go out and walk both regular and new routes with them, pointing out hazard areas and offering suggestions on how to avoid dangerous situations. This will also provide parents and caregivers an opportunity to model safe behaviours to their children.

*A checklist to help you decide if your neighbourhood is a friendly place to walk can be found at [www.nsc.org/walk/wkcheck.htm](http://www.nsc.org/walk/wkcheck.htm)*

## GET THE WORD OUT ON AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

Each and everyday, all road users witness or are involved in some form of aggressive driving. This behaviour can lead to a traffic collision and potentially serious injuries. In fact, the 2000 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report found that 1/3 of all traffic collisions were a result of aggressive driving.

Signs of aggressive driving include expressing frustration, lack of attention to driving, making frequent and unnecessary lane changes, running red lights and speeding. Help get the word out to prevent aggressive driving. Discuss the issue with your family, friends, co-workers and community groups. Last but not least, lead by example.

**Here are some tips to help you discuss aggressive driving:**

**Emphasize personal driving skills.** We all need to look at ourselves to see if we are contributors to the aggression. Concentrate on those habits that need to be worked on.

**Realize traffic collisions are caused by the way we drive.** Motor vehicle collisions are not inevitable, they are avoidable.

**Reduce your stress when you drive.** Allow plenty of time for the trip, listen to soothing music, improve the comfort in your vehicle and understand that you cannot control the traffic only your reaction to it!

**Assume other drivers' mistakes are not personal.** Be polite and courteous, even if the other driver is not. Avoid all conflict if possible. If another driver challenges you, take a deep breath and get out of the way.

**Report aggressive drivers.** Call the OPP or your local police department. If you have a cell phone in your vehicle, keep the numbers handy. When you see a driver operating a vehicle in a threatening manner, pull over safely, stop your vehicle and make the call. Make sure you get a vehicle description, license number, the location and direction of travel. Remember, you could help prevent a tragedy.

**Be a courteous driver.** Everyone has the opportunity to set an example on the road to other drivers. Also, you have the opportunity to set a good example to passengers in your car, especially children! Every bit counts to help make our roadways safer.





## DRIVING THROUGH CONSTRUCTION ZONES

Every year, construction workers are killed or critically injured by motorists while working on Ontario's roads and highways. Speeding and traffic collisions in construction zones can be fatal and may result in severe penalties including doubled fines, license suspension, demerit points or even jail.

Here are some tips to remember when driving through construction zones:

### Plan ahead

Expect some delays. Listen to local radio and TV traffic reports before you head out. Map out your route to avoid congested areas. Information about current highway construction zones is available from the Ministry of Transportation, call 1-800-268-1376 or log onto [www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/traveller/construction](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/traveller/construction)

### Approaching construction zones

Start slowing down early, be patient and obey warning signs and signal persons. Avoid changing lanes, give yourself extra following space and be prepared to stop.

### Exiting from construction zones

Don't race to speed up. Compressed traffic will fan out into the new lanes so give yourself lots of space. Be prepared for what other drivers might do.

## DRIVING WITH TRUCKS

Windsor-Essex County residents, as much or more than anywhere else, share the road everyday with large trucks. These trucks create special driving hazards for those driving smaller vehicles. The length, width and extended blind spots and large volume trucks are especially challenging for all drivers. That's why it is important to be aware of how trucks operate and how we can share the road in a manner that will be comfortable and safe for everyone.

The following points can help you be a safer driver in mixed traffic:

- Be aware of a truck's turn signals, especially at intersections. Long trucks turning right may move into the left lane to avoid hitting the curb as they turn.
- Trucks need a longer distance when stopping. Make sure to signal your intentions before turning, slowing or stopping to let trucks behind you have more time to brake.
- When stopped behind a truck, leave at least one car length between the front of your vehicle and the truck ahead of you. Trucks will usually roll back when the driver releases the brake and engages the clutch.
- Truck drivers rely on their mirrors to see what's happening. Make sure you are visible when driving beside a truck and stay out of their blind spots which is typically a truck's sides and back. If you can't see their mirrors, then the truck driver probably cannot see you! Don't follow too close!
- Pass trucks quickly, safely and don't cut in front of a truck too closely.
- When passing a truck on a highway, stay as far over in your lane as possible in order to avoid the wind pressure created at high speeds.
- Don't change lanes abruptly and slow down to let trucks have the right of way.

# TRAVELING WITH YOUR PET

## TRAVELING WITH YOUR PET

All passengers, including pets, should be safely restrained while traveling in any vehicle. A loose pet can be very distracting to the driver and is dangerous for the pet as well as passengers. In a traffic collision, a dog can hit the windshield, the back of a seat or another passenger with a force 3 times their weight, even at slower speeds! Even if an unrestrained pet is not injured in a traffic collision, a frightened pet can get in the way of rescue workers.

The safest place for a pet is to be properly restrained in the back seat or cargo area of the vehicle. Restraints will prevent pets from jumping around, getting under foot, jumping out of an open window or door, hitting a passenger in a traffic collision or causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle. There are a number of restraints available from most pet stores, such as seat belt attachments, crates, carriers, pet car seats and vehicle barriers.

*For more information, contact your veterinarian or favourite pet store.*



## CAR SEAT RESTRAINTS

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Proper and regular use of a car restraint will reduce the likelihood of a child being injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash by at least 70%.
- In 2001, over 50% of young children in Ontario who were involved in motor vehicle crashes and suffered major or fatal injuries, were incorrectly restrained or not restrained at all.
- The Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) car seat safety check results in Windsor-Essex County (2002) indicated that 4 out of 5 children are not properly restrained.

While the overall use of child car seat restraints are up, their proper and consistent use is still low. Transport Canada outlines four key stages in child car seat restraints that you should be aware of as a parent.

### Stage One

Use a rear-facing seat until your baby weighs 10kg or 22 lbs. This is usually about one year.

### Stage Two

Use a forward-facing child seat until your child weighs 18kg or 40lbs. This is usually between the ages of 1 year and 4 ½ years old.

### Stage Three

Use a booster seat until your child weighs 27kg or 60lbs. This is usually around 8 years old. Also, double check the weight and height limit on the booster seat's manufacturer labels.

### Stage Four

Usually at 8 years old, a child can graduate to using only a seat belt. Make sure your child is buckled up and riding in the back seat.

Remember! A child should not ride up front in a vehicle until they are over the age of 12 years old. They should be safely secured in the back seat.

*For more details on the proper use of child car seat restraints, check the Transport Canada's web site: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/en/menu.htm>*

**Summer Students** - Many local workplaces hire students for the summer months. Consider *The First Step*, a safety handbook looking at workplace safety, as part of the job orientation. Call the Windsor Occupational Health Information Services for more information, 254-5157.

**ASH ART**

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, in partnership with teachers from all local school boards, the Art Council of Windsor & Region, Heart Health Action, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Devonshire Mall host a tobacco prevention poster peer education project for youth ages 13-19. Students create a poster depicting their values, views, beliefs and thoughts about tobacco and how it has impacted their life.

Posters will be on display from April 22, 2003 at 10:00 a.m. to April 27, 2003 at 5:00 p.m.  
 Devonshire Mall in the Bay Court area  
 Judging: April 22, 2003 from 3:00-5:00 p.m.  
 Contact Information:  
 Cheryl Zaffino 258-2146 x 1263

**ARRIVE ALIVE BOTTLE DRIVE**

A one-day event to raise awareness and funds to help reduce drinking and driving in Ontario. At 8 different Beer Stores in Windsor, volunteers and community agencies will be outside distributing educational material about drinking and driving. Donate your empty beer bottles or put a little money in the coin box. Fifty percent of all monies collected will be given to the volunteer organizations to develop programs to help eliminate impaired driving in Ontario. The event is hosted by The Committee to End the Abuse of Substances in Essex County (CEASE).

Date: Saturday, May 24, 2003  
 Time: 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
 Contact Information: Call 251-0500 for a list of participating Beer Stores or check out [www.occid.org](http://www.occid.org)

**A NEW MOTHER'S EMOTIONS**

A workshop focusing on adjusting to parenthood. Call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit 258-2146 x 1340 or 1-800-265-5822 x 1340 for information and free registration.



**RELAY FOR LIFE**

Demonstrate your commitment to the community by supporting the Canadian Cancer Society *Relay For Life*. Volunteer your time, make a donation or register a team. The relay is a 12-hour relay event with teams of 10 walking, jogging or running around a track. Teams may consist of colleagues, family members and friends. A tent village where teams can relax and socialize will be available as well as activities, entertainment and food. A \$10 registration fee is required for each participant.

Date: Friday-Saturday, June 13-14, 2003  
 Time: 7:00 p.m. - 7:00 a.m.  
 Location: St. Thomas of Villa Nova Secondary School, LaSalle. Contact Number: 254-5116

**ATTENTION PARENTS OF SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN**

Parenting is the most important job you'll ever have and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit is here to help with FREE workshops for parents of school-aged children. Each workshop will cover a separate topic of interest specifically designed for parents at this stage of parenting.

The following are a few of the workshops:

***Discipline***

How to tow the hard line and keep the peace;

***Communication***

How to talk the talk so kids will listen;

***Bullying***

How to help the bully, bystander and victim;

***Child Behaviour***

Why they do the things they do!

Workshops are available in both city and county locations! Registration is required. For more information or to register please call 258-2146 x 1268.



*Interested in bringing wellness to your workplace? The Working Toward Wellness Program offers consultation and support to help workplaces start and maintain a wellness program that works.*

*For more information call 258-2146 x 3100.*

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Windsor - Essex  
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WINDSOR - ESSEX COUNTY  
**HEALTH UNIT**  
Unité sanitaire  
de Windsor comté d'Essex

## WEBSITE SUPPORT

### Aggressive Driving

Drivers.com

[http://www.drivers.com/Top\\_Behavior\\_Aggressive\\_Driving.html](http://www.drivers.com/Top_Behavior_Aggressive_Driving.html)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/aggressive/>

Road Watch

[www.roadwatch.ca](http://www.roadwatch.ca)

### Road Safety

Traffic Injury Research Foundation

<http://www.trafficinjuryresearch.com/index.cfm>

Canadian Automobile Association

<http://www.caa.ca/e/news-issues/index.shtml>

Ontario Ministry of Transportation

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca>

### Child Safety

Transport Canada

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/>

Canadian Automobile Association

<http://www.caa.ca/e/news-issues/child-safety.shtml>

### Driver Fatigue

Canada Safety Council

<http://www.safety-council.org/info/traffic/NOS-2002.html>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/drowsy\\_driving1/index.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/drowsy_driving1/index.html)

### Pedestrian Safety

National Safety Council - How walkable is your community?

[www.nsc.org//walk/wkcheck.htm](http://www.nsc.org//walk/wkcheck.htm)

Pedestrian Safety

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids/biktour/pedsafety](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids/biktour/pedsafety)

### Cell Phone Legislation

Smart Risk

<http://www.smartrisk.ca>

Advocates for Cell Phone Safety

[www.drivenowchatlater.com](http://www.drivenowchatlater.com)

**Do you have suggestions for future topics?**

Please submit your ideas to Meghan Toews

E-mail: [mtoews@wechealthunit.org](mailto:mtoews@wechealthunit.org)

Phone: 519-258-2146 x 3100 Fax: 519-776-6102