Driver Education Program News

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The Driver Education Program Team

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ODOT - TSD Welcomes New Driver Education Program Manager

Bill Warner comes to Transportation Safety from the Department of Education side of the world. He was the Traffic Safety Coordinator for the Driver Education program at Bandon School District as well as a state certified School Bus Driver Trainer for the past 13 years.

While much of this position is new to Bill, he is not new to Transportation Safety Driver Education. He worked for "Harv" as one of the Trainer of Trainers for ODOT-TSD, and WOU, assisting in curriculum development, both for the Trainer-of-Trainer program as well as the state endorsed curriculum. He also worked in the Mentorship program for districts that were starting or troubleshooting Driver Education.

Bill is a Past-President of the Oregon Traffic Safety Educators Association. He was the Secondary Division Chairman of ADTSEA (American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association) for the past four years. He has been a presenter at numerous state and national conferences. In 2006, Bill was recognized as Oregon's Traffic Safety Education "Teacher of the Year" and in 2008, Bill received the national "Teacher of Excellence" award from ADTSEA.

Anyone who knows Bill has confidence that he will bring passion to what he does a program manager. Look for great things to come in Driver Education!❖

Continuing Education

William A. Warner
Driver Education Program
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So, you're asking yourself, "why a story on continuing education?" I'm so glad you asked! It seems that during a discussion at the Pacific NW Driver & Traffic Safety Conference held March 6-7; I was overheard saying, "You don't need to worry about continuing education."

Apparently, statements such as this can sometimes be troublesome, as is the case with this particular comment. In context, I approached a group of driver educators who appeared to be stressing out over their need to have 15 hours of continuing education every two years. Realizing the intent of the rule, and that there are several opportunities available for an instructor to get 15 hours of continuing education, my thought was, "they really shouldn't be stressing about something that can actually be kind of informative and maybe even fun!" Thus, the statement made above and the reason for the article.

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Continuing education is beneficial to all professionals, including driver educators. What is not beneficial is to waste even one micron of energy that should instead, be reserved for encouraging and exciting our students on to driver ed success! This is what I meant when I told those educators not to worry.

> *There are several opportunities available for an instructor to get 15 hours of continuing education.*

In fact, to help you to *not worry* even more, let me lay this idea out for you. When you went through the WOU training to become driver educators, you had at least 80, if not 120 hours of training. This covers your first two years of CE requirements. Just remember, every course or class you take drops off the radar after two years.

If you are an instructor with more than two years in service, the formula is really simple… Courses taken between today's date and two years prior to today's date count toward being up-to-date continuing education credits.

Look at the driver education related workshops, conferences, and other training opportunities you have taken and add up all of the hours. If you have at least 8 hours per year, you're good to go!

To make things even better, we are beginning work on providing 1, 2, and 3 hour on-line continuing education courses for you to take from your home at times that are most convenient for you. Look for the first of these courses to be on-line this summer. We will give you plenty of information and notice when they are available.

Therefore, as I said at the Pacific NW Driver and Traffic Safety Conference, "You don't need to worry about continuing education." The opportunities to keep your credits up to date are out there! ❖ -- Bill

**For more information about continuing education and related topics, log on to our webpage at www.oregon.gov/odot/ts/drivers_ed.shtml and look under Instructor Information and Resources.*

Four Deadly Driving Situations and How to Survive Them

By Jamie Page Deaton - U.S. News & World Report

If only real life were like a driver's ed test. Think about it: you could be driving along when you hear a loud bang. Everything slows down, and on your windshield you'd see a question straight out of a driver's ed textbook, complete with multiple-choice answers.

Unfortunately, life on the road isn't like driver's ed. As drivers we all have to make split-second life-or-death decisions. And, you may not remember all you should from your long ago driver's ed class. "Driver education is a lifetime process," says Dr. Bill Van Tassel, the national manager of driver safety programs for AAA. It's up to all drivers to learn the proper response to common -- and not-so-common -- emergencies that can happen on the road.

Brake Failure

"If a car can't start, that's an annoyance," says Dr. Van Tassel. But, "a car that can't stop is a major safety concern." Brake failure is one of those nightmare situations that every driver dreads, but few prepare for.

The first sign of brake failure is the loss of resistance on the brake pedal. Rather than pushing up against your foot, the pedal will easily move all the way to the floor. If that happens, your first instinct may be to continue to press the pedal to the floor, but that's not what you should be doing.

"Give the brake pedal a couple of pumps," says Van Tassel. Doing so will help determine if there is any hydraulic fluid left in the braking system. After pumping the brake pedal a few times, you may begin to feel some resistance, which means you may have enough fluid to stop the car.

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Key Driving Skills for Any Emergency
Stay calm, but act quickly
Keep your eyes up and on a clear, safe path of travel
Make your responses deliberate – don't slam on brakes or jerk the steering wheel

However, if you don't feel any resistance, you need to find another way to safely slow down the car. Dr. Van Tassel says you should take your foot off the gas and downshift into a lower gear and let the slower engine revolutions slow the car (that method is called engine braking, and it's what a lot of truckers do to keep their brakes from overheating when they're hauling loads through hilly areas).

While it's easiest to downshift in a car with a manual transmission or an automatic with a manual mode, you can still downshift in a car with an automatic transmission. In addition to park, neutral, reverse, and drive, most automatics also have first or second gear labeled on the shift column (they're the "1" and "2" you probably never use).

Even if pumping the brakes and downshifting don't work, Van Tassel says keeping your eyes on the road and looking for a clear path and place to stop is key. If you can, use your flashers and horn to warn others to stay clear of you. And, if nothing is slowing your car, you can try scraping it against something like a guardrail or wall to slow it. "This sacrifices the car, but saves you and your passengers," Van Tassel notes. After all, "the car is replaceable. You aren't." However, it should only be done in extreme cases where you've exhausted all other ways of slowing the car. Finally, once you get the car stopped, turn it off and call for help. Don't drive it again until the problem with the brakes is fixed.

Unintended Acceleration

Unintended acceleration is all over the news lately, so it's no wonder it's on a lot of drivers' minds. While it's extremely rare, most drivers should know what to do if they experience it.

As in the case of brake failure, Dr. Van Tassel recommends that drivers experiencing unintended acceleration keep their eyes up and attempt to find the clearest path down the road or to safety. At the first sign of unintended acceleration, firmly apply the brakes. "Today's brakes are very powerful, and that is usually enough to stop the car," Van Tassel notes.

If applying the brakes in a firm, sustained manner doesn't slow the car, shift into neutral and coast to a safe spot. What's key, Van Tassel says, is that you keep the engine on until you stop. If you turn off the engine, you'll lose power brakes and steering -- and in some cases turning off the car will lock the steering wheel. After you coast to a safe spot, turn the car off and call for help. Don't drive the car again until the problem is fixed.

To get comfortable with shifting into neutral while the car is moving, or downshifting in the case of brake failure you should find a place where you can practice these maneuvers. "We recommend low-risk, low-speed practice," says Van Tassel. So find a large, empty parking lot, accelerate to 15 miles per hour or so, and practice shifting while the car is moving until you get the hang of it. That way, if you encounter brake failure or unintended acceleration, you'll be better prepared.

A Blown Tire

A tire blowout can be incredibly unnerving. The sound is sudden and scary. And, Dr. Van Tassel notes, when a tire blows out, "steering will change. [The car] will be hard to steer and may pull hard to one side."

Most drivers' first instinct will be to apply the brakes. But that's wrong. Dr. Van Tassel says that when faced with a blowout, you should "stay off the brakes. [Applying them] can actually make things worse." Instead, you should "concentrate on getting control." That means keeping your eyes on the road and finding a safe path, as well as maintaining a firm grip on the steering wheel and easing off the gas.

When you've coasted to a safe place and slowed to 15 to 20 miles an hour or so, then gently apply the brakes. When you've stopped, turn off the car, and if you aren't comfortable changing the tire yourself, call for help.

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A Skid

While the other three life-threatening situations are usually due to mechanical problems, Dr. Van Tassel says a skid is "usually the result of a driver failing to adapt to road conditions." While most driving is done on dry pavement, Van Tassel points out that in the rain, traction can be reduced by 30 percent. In order to maintain the same level of traction on wet roads as you get on dry, you then need to reduce your speed by 30 percent. But most drivers don't do that.

However, even if you've reduced your speed, a skid can still occur. And you need to know how to respond.

When you feel your car lose traction, don't slam on the brakes. The first step is to stay calm and keep your eyes on a clear path of travel -- that's where you want to go. "Drivers tend to look at things they don't want to hit," says Van Tassel. Unfortunately, the car tends to go wherever the driver is looking. So, Van Tassel recommends looking "at the space between the telephone poles, instead of at the telephone poles." That way, you're more likely to avoid hitting them.

"If you've lost traction on your rear wheels, applying the brakes shifts the car's weight to the front wheels," says Van Tassel. That means you then have even less traction on the rear wheels, which can compound the skid.

Instead, take your foot off the gas, and look and steer where you want to go. You may remember your driver's ed teacher telling you to initially steer in the direction of the skid, but Van Tassel says that AAA has found that focusing on where you want to go is easier for most drivers to do. "Steering into a skid is still good advice," Van Tassel says, "but keeping your focus forward is easier."

Above all, if you're in a skid, don't give up. "There's always something you can do to regain traction," Van Tassel says. "As long as you're looking where you want to go, your hands will [steer the car] toward that." ❖

Compliance Corner

By Mary DeFerrari

What types of deficiencies do we find during a compliance review? Program Coordinators frequently ask that question, so in this and future issues we will offer some tips!

Apply for reimbursement only one time per student! Let's say a student completed his DE course, but failed; the next year the student completed the full course and passed.

There was talk in the past about the student in this example being eligible for reimbursement more than once, since "completion" of the course is what law requires. But Oregon Revised Statute also makes it clear that each student is eligible for reimbursement only once. If your program is counting on reimbursement, make sure that your students have not been claimed previously!

Account for all fees! Let's say your program charges $350 for the full course. But is that the full cost to each student? What if you also collected missed-drive fees from two students, and you collected $10 for each required text book?

All fees collected as part of the course must be claimed on your reimbursement form. Our revised form (coming soon!) will make it easier to break out the out-of-the-ordinary fees.

REVIEW each instructor's DMV certified court print! You know that DMV's certified court print is required annually for each instructor. Once you have a new print for each instructor, each year, your responsibility is done, right?

There is one additional very important step: carefully review each report. If the driving record doesn't meet requirements in OAR 737-015-0070(2), the instructor does not meet minimum qualifications to teach an approved driver ed program. We have actually seen suspensions and other disqualifying convictions on instructor driving records.

Demonstrate compliance in all areas! This means when you prepare for compliance review, you may need to contact your finance office to get your reimbursement records. You may need to coordinate with the teacher for access to student records, and you may need to meet with your fleet administrator to get keys to the driver ed cars. Whatever it takes, please have everything available at the time of your review. If there is an issue, contact our office prior to your compliance visit.

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Document: Each student has a permit by the first class. Not only does each student need a permit, but you need documentation showing that each student has a valid Oregon permit by the first class! There are a few simple ways to accomplish this, such as keeping photocopies of permits (issue date is on the permit).

A policy stating that students need a permit prior to registering is not good enough. What about a student who doesn't "officially register" until the second class? Does your documentation leave any doubt?

Assure each student completed every element of the course prior to issuing a certificate of completion. That means 30 hours of classroom, 6 hours of behind-the-wheel, 6 hours of practice driving observation, and 5 hours of home practice driving must all be completed, passed, and documented before issuing a certificate. Who is responsible for this final review in your program?

So, how does *your* program measure up? ❖

Watch for more compliance tips in our next issue!

Calendar of Upcoming Events and Opportunities

ADTSEA Conference, St. Louis, Mo July 24-29, 2010
OTSEA Fall Conference, Clackamas, OR October 1-2, 2010
Oregon Transportation Safety Conference, Salem, OR October 12-14, 2010
National Teen Driver Safety Week October 17–23, 2010

RIDE LIKE A FRIEND

A school-based peer-to-peer initiative

Start Planning Now for National Teen Driver Safety Week - October 17 – 23, 2010
http://www.ridelikeafriend.org/

Ride Like A Friend. Drive Like You Care (RLAF) is a school-based initiative focused on the relationship between teen drivers and their teen passengers. Improving the safety of teen driving with peer passengers is at the heart of RLAF. The program aims to 1) build awareness about teen drivers' motor vehicle crash (MVC) risks involving passengers in their car and 2) establish beliefs and behaviors among teen drivers and passengers that promote safe driving.

Designed as a peer-to-peer in-school campaign, ideally implementation of the initiative will engage teens thoughtfully on the topic of driving safety and passengers. RLAF also will provide a sense of empowerment and responsibility as to their role in the car, whether as a driver or passenger. The initiative website, ridelikeafriend.com, offers prepackaged downloadable materials, activity ideas and prepared toolkits, and campaign planning guidance to target certain behaviors and deliver key messages. RLAF was evaluated for process and outcome in two Philadelphia-area pilot high schools in 2008. In 2009, pilot high schools in different areas of the US are participating in the implementation and outcome evaluation of RLAF.