

Driver/Education

An Independent Information Service

War on the roads: *battle for the fast lane*

It shouldn't be a war but, increasingly, it is. Too many vehicles vying for scarce road space. The battle for roadway space seems to be heating up, and nowhere is the battle more intense than in the fast lanes of motorways designed to speed traffic to its multiple destinations. Question is: are educators and enforcement agencies doing enough to help make traffic a cooperative effort rather than a series of skirmishes in an ongoing war?

As road space becomes scarcer the kind of traffic congestion shown in the photo on this page is becoming increasingly common. Sometimes such traffic flows along in an orderly manner, but, as driving educator Pierre Savoy puts it, traffic typically consists of “thousands of individuals with thousands of agendas.” Somehow, the driver-in-a-big-hurry has to share the road with the leisurely driver who plans time well and is content to follow the flow. The “little old

lady” has to mix it with the macho guy in the SUV and the “old guy in the baseball cap” with the brash young twenty-somethings with the peppy sports cars, out to show off driving skills. Add to this the professional trucker with the distance haul and the middle-aged broker using the car as an office, and the mix becomes a real challenge for traffic policy makers.

If traffic harmony (and efficiency) is to be achieved, somehow all these individualisms and agendas have to blend into a single culture

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of the roadway in which the individuals, to some extent at least, yield their individuality to the common good. If traffic is to work well, there needs to be a higher degree of harmony during roadway interactions.

Unfortunately, roadway culture appears to be deteriorating rather than improving. Sometimes it seems as if the problem of competition for scarce road space is being met with an automotive arms race rather than any concerted effort to develop a more efficient and cooperative culture. Goaded on by auto-makers' marketing, drivers are buying into aggressive torque curves rather than enhanced communication techniques, gearing up for battle with SUVs they perceive as safer (and even con-

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Traffic congestion: is it a war or a team effort?

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verted military “Hummers”) rather than exploring tactical and strategic skills for coping. Some of the concept vehicles on display at auto shows are beginning to look more like combat vehicles than passenger sedans.

Hot debates

The hot debates about aggressive driving and poor road etiquette that go on endlessly in the media and in letters-to-the-editor pages are more often diatribes against “bad drivers” (the other guy) rather than real debates about the task of driving itself.

Our *Drivers.com* discussion area on “Aggressive Driving and Road Rage” is an attempt to get at the issues. The topic in question: slow drivers in the fast lane. Or, perhaps more correctly stated, this debate is about whether fast drivers in the left lane should move over and let even faster drivers through.

COMMENT

By *tinytim* on Thursday, January 17, 2002 - 07:08 pm:

Drivers who drive slightly above the speed limit in the left lane are not trying to enforce speeding laws, they are simply just trying not to get a speeding ticket. More motorists should worry about that. If a highway only has two lanes, why should one subject themselves to the stopping and going of traffic merging on and off in the right lane, and maybe being stuck behind someone doing 20mph under the speed limit? Anyone who has a heavy foot doesn't necessarily own the left lane. Learn to share the road or get off it. I'm sick of having people try to bully me out of their way because I'm not risking a speeding ticket. I'll drive where I please and as safely as I please.

Driver educators should not treat this as a simple question of roadway morality—“don't speed,” “slower drivers keep right,” and so on. It's a much more complicated issue and one deserving of significant intellectual scrutiny by educators. Slower vehicles should move to the right, but what if the slower vehicles are themselves faster than the traffic in the next lane over? Is the driver going at the speed limit in the left lane, and slowly overtaking other traffic, being “passive-aggressive” by not constantly moving right to let still faster traffic through? Is the driver who moves right to get around the so-called passive-aggressive type being rude, aggressive, and reckless? Is there a cultural solution to this conflict for space and how do we set about finding it?

Roadway rights

In a milieu in which there is no acceptable means to communicate the sentiment “excuse me, I'm in a big hurry,” perhaps the anger felt by the rushing drivers is predictable, if not excusable.

This question was addressed to some degree in our article, “Education and the Media,” in Volume 10, Issue 4 of *Driver/Education*. We took the specific example of the Interstate 4 motorway in Florida, which is used heavily by commuters on their way to and from work in Orlando. Many of these drivers will not have much by way of alternative options to reach their destinations.

On two-lane stretches of the highway, drivers who want to go faster will migrate to the left lane and cruise along, slowly overtaking the traffic in the right lane. These “drivers-in-a-hurry” can be frustrating for the “drivers-in-a-big-hurry.” The latter, often ready to speed and take chances when changing lanes, frequently resort to the tactic of overtaking on the right.

The overtaking on the right tactic can be seductive in that traffic tends to travel in clusters, leaving inviting spaces in the right lane. The driver-in-a-big-hurry rushes to grab the open space, pass a few cars, and then, perhaps aggressively, head for an opening in the left lane again.

As the comments in the

Drivers.com discussion area demonstrate, there are a number of tactical, social, and legal dynamics at work in this interplay of vehicles:

“Drivers who drive slightly above the speed limit in the left lane are not trying to enforce speeding laws, they are simply just trying not to get a speeding ticket,” argues ‘*tinytim*.’ “If a highway only has two lanes, why should one subject themselves to the stopping and going of traffic merging on and off in the right lane, and maybe being stuck behind someone doing 20mph under the speed limit?”

‘*mad-at-tim*’ responds: “When the right or center lane is clear AND someone wants to get by, the *tinytim*'s of this world should move right as soon as it is safe and reasonable to do so, to let faster traffic through. It's not their job to enforce speed limits.”

However, ‘*Mad-at-lawbreakers*’ argues that he “should not have to settle for an uneasy ride, wearing and tearing my brakes, and using up more gas, to let traffic on and off in the right lane because I've chosen to STAY OUT OF TROUBLE, be a good driver, and obey the SPEED LIMIT which so many ignore!”

Educators – enter the fray!

For driving journalist and traffic educator Gary Magwood the dilemma of road rights in the fast lane can be eased by the simple maxim of “keep right except when passing.” Magwood spends many hours on Ontario's 401 motorway, a busy multilane freeway that stretches through the heart of the province between Detroit and the Quebec border. He thinks that the Department of Transportation should change its “slower drivers keep right” signs to reflect this. It's not a matter of speed, he argues, but of driving principle.

This principle can work well, Magwood says, if drivers act cooperatively instead of being stubborn about their so-called rights in the left lane. Magwood says he is often in the left lane and a bit above the speed limit, but if a faster driver comes up behind him,

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perhaps tailgating or flashing headlights to get past, he moves over.

But what happens if, as this writer has witnessed on the Florida I-4 highway, the roadway is busy and the left lane is crowded with drivers who all want to go faster than the right-lane traffic? Should they continually jostle back and forth between left and right lane to accommodate the more aggressive speeders?

Obviously, at some point, traffic has to settle on a speed and rate of flow that is good for most of the drivers and also good for the roadway. Otherwise the reasonably harmonious flow of rush-hour commuter traffic will turn into a mad, constantly lane-changing melee, with a greatly increased risk of crashes and a greatly increased stress rate.

Maintaining harmony in this environment involves a mix of factors, says Drivers.com's Douglas Black. Enforcement of laws against aggressive and reckless driving is a part of the solution, Dr. Black feels, but also, and perhaps

more importantly, "We need to cultivate in drivers a sense of acceptable norms of roadway behavior." This, he believes, can be done through a range of modes such as public service announcements in the media, promoting public discussion, and also through formal training and education of drivers at various stages of their driving careers.

Media and the driver

The hottest program about driving on TV these days is probably "The Best of the World's Worst Drivers." But this is merely a montage of video footage from traffic cameras, onboard police cameras, and amateur video: police pursuits, drunk drivers, criminals making getaways, and various wacky driver stories about criminally stupid maniacs reversing on the freeway. Prominently missing from the road wars debate is reasoned input from educators and driving experts that would help analyze traffic situations and add some insights to debates such as that between tinytim and other commentators.

As *Driver/Education* pointed out in our "Education and the Media" article in

Volume 10, Issue 4, the mainstream media could play a more constructive role by being more analytical about driving, crashes, and roadway issues.

On the other hand, it will be difficult for the media to take on this role without the help of driving experts, researchers, and safety professionals. Perhaps these interest groups should address the problem in forums, conferences, and academic establishments as a prelude to formulating a credible input to the ongoing, but so far unstructured and undisciplined, debate about road culture and appropriate driving behavior. ○

Global web conference on aggressive driving issues

In the fall of 2000, Drivers.com, along with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and the Transportation Research Board, hosted the first Global Web Conference on Aggressive Driving Issues. Seven papers were presented and several weeks of discussions followed. Over 10,000 visitors came to the conference web site. The papers and discussion are available at: www.aggressive.drivers.com

Communication: developing a roadway culture

By Douglas Black

Cultural, or social norms emerge in myriad and complex ways in a society, and take a long time to become established. For drivers, the norms also change over time, and may even differ depending on time of day, and differ by jurisdiction. For example, drivers in Pittsburgh have a peculiar habit of allowing the first one or two cars wishing to turn left to do so immediately upon the light changing from red to green. In most cities, "jumping the green" and turning left would be cause for angry reactions.

How is it that this left turn practice has become an accepted social norm in one city, but would be frowned upon elsewhere? Norms are sometimes seen as a process of creating order in the absence of official rules, and are often part of an effort to maximize benefits for most people in their everyday interactions. Sociologist J. Peter Rothe calls this the moral order of the roadway. We communicate norms and expecta-

tions in many ways, but sending signals to others about what is acceptable or not is most often done through language, including body language.

However, the transfer of information from driver to driver or driver to pedestrian, through either body language or spoken language, is very difficult. Furthermore, norms that may have taken decades to get established can be easily ignored by individual drivers who either aren't able to "read" the norms well, or choose to flout them.

Male ideals of driving

These drivers vary across the spectrum of gender, race, age, experience level, and so forth. Sarah Redshaw, [writing on Drivers.com](http://writing.on.drivers.com), examined male driving behavior in Australia, and suggested that "while it may appear to be great fun to express one's individuality as a person through cars and driving, the roads are not an appropriate place to do it. The needs and functions of driving have changed, there are more cars on the road and drivers with varied needs and interests as

drivers, yet male ideals of driving remain dominant."

In an [article presented](#) at the Aggressive Driving Conference hosted by Drivers.com, Leon James and Diane Nahl point to what they see as more widely changing norms for aggressive driving in North America. "Aggressive driving is on the increase because it is a learned habit that is transmitted from one generation to the next, and reinforced in the media." The authors argue that the roads are becoming more competitive, even hostile, and that most drivers find these conditions emotionally challenging. These harsh emotions "encourage drivers to be self-serving and opportunistic," they suggest. The authors have also posted several reports done by students, who examined inter-vehicular communication practices in Hawaii. ○

Watch for a follow-up on this topic in an upcoming issue of Driver/Education newsletter. Reader input welcomed.

What's happening ...

Distractions of all kinds

Researchers at the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center estimate that each year 284,000 distracted drivers are involved in serious crashes. "We found that 15 percent of drivers in the study were not paying attention and just over half of these (8.3 percent) were distracted by something inside or outside the vehicle," said Dr. Jane Stutts, author of the study. Details can be [seen on the web site](#), along with high quality photos of distracting activities in cars.

The ultimate jam session

Singapore is a living laboratory for intelligent transport systems, a catch-all phrase for high tech strategies to gather data, manage flow, and inform drivers of congestion ahead. Traffic does indeed move noticeably smoother here than in American metropolitan areas of comparable size. That smoothness is dependent on having all 92 miles of Singapore's freeways and many surface roads wired for both electronic data collection and video surveillance, so that the island's entire road system is essentially one sentient organism. But the Singapore miracle has less to do with technology than with bureaucracy. Plenty of U.S. cities already deploy hardware as advanced as Singapore's. The island nation's genius is that it has persuaded government agencies to cooperate in ways unparalleled elsewhere, and that it has done a remarkable job of rearranging drivers' expectations. [Read article at Drivers.com.](#)

Hazardous cargo: truckers wary of terrorists

A truck with 60,000 pounds of propane would "make one heck of a bomb," says California driver Gary Becker. The realization that there are many kinds of hazardous cargo on our roads that could be tools for terrorist attacks is causing the trucking industry, drivers, regulators, and the general public some major headaches in the aftermath of September 11. Devices that would allow police to stop a runaway vehicle by remote control, and tracking technology that alerts dispatchers if a truck strays from its intended course, are amongst technologies being tested to increase security. In addition, truckers are discussing the need to carry guns and making plans to watch out for each other on the highway

and at truckstops. Licensing of drivers qualified to haul hazardous materials is also under scrutiny. [See USA Today article](#)

Do cars provide psychosocial benefits?

Using in-depth interviews with car owners and non-owners in Scotland, these researchers conclude that people derive several psychosocial benefits from their cars. These include feelings of protection, autonomy, and of being in a comfortable cocoon. Cars were seen as more convenient and reliable than public transport, and to confer prestige and other socially desirable attributes such as competence, skill, and masculinity. Source: *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, Vol. 7, Issue 2, pp. 119-135, March, 2002. Hiscock, Rosemary; Macintyre, Sally; Kearns, Ade; & Ellaway, Anne.

How's your driving—if they're watching?

If the driver of a company vehicle is misbehaving it affects the company in two ways—insurance rates and bad PR. Two Atlanta-based companies say they achieve big improvements in both departments for clients who sign on for their services. DriverCheck and FleetSafe are amongst the biggest driver monitoring companies in the U.S. and they both guarantee a 10 percent reduction in crashes, or your money back, reports the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "Our accident reduction rates typically run about 25 percent," says Hadley Benton, FleetSafe's chief operating officer. They reckon they can be particularly effective with small operations that have a few non-professionals drivers and don't have their own monitoring or training facilities.

Telematics: boon or bust?

A recent eBrain study indicates that mobile navigation and information systems (also known as "telematics devices") are poised to enter the mainstream as consumers increasingly come into contact with this burgeoning technology. Helping to drive the predicted surge in telematics are potentially lower prices and higher consumer exposure to the products. In spite of very low ownership rates, nearly nine out of 10 automobile owners are aware of telematics

devices, largely due to word of mouth and exposure through rental car agencies and third parties. Among those who have used telematics devices, the reaction is overwhelmingly positive. Some 83 percent found the product to be "very or somewhat useful." [Read the full article on Drivers.com.](#)

Atlanta's cab drivers under scrutiny

Most Atlanta cab drivers have good driving records, but Jacob Eze Ananaba is one of the worst. "He's the poster child for somebody who should [have his permit] revoked," John Turner, the chief hearing officer for the city's taxi court, told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. During his 11 years as an Atlanta cab driver he's had three license suspensions, scores of moving violations, at least four traffic accidents and several counts of verbally abusing passengers and inflating fares. Using the state's Open Records Act, *Journal-Constitution* reporters were able to match 95 percent of Atlanta's taxicab drivers to their driving and criminal histories and found that only 121 of the city's 2,860 taxicab drivers whose records were examined had spotless driving histories. Seventy-two percent of drivers had a recorded a serious violation, ranging from excessive speed to DUI. In the past seven years, 622 taxicab drivers have had their licenses suspended.

The trucker and the professor

A few decades ago, truckers were the folk heroes of American culture—"the dotcomers of their day" says Wired Magazine writer David Diamond. But the independence of the trucker is giving way to a new role that is high-tech and high pressure. In the freewheeling days a driver would deliver his or her load and head for a truckstop. There, he'd pick up a payphone and start looking for his next load. Now, GPS tracks the truck, and an onboard satellite-based communication device hooks the driver up to a system that has already planned his or her next delivery. The science of logistics, once the esoteric domain of the military, is taking over. [Read the article on Drivers.com.](#)

Effect of a change in driver ed on accident risk in Denmark

Driver education in Denmark was changed radically in 1986. In an earlier study, it was found that after the change in education the number of accidents involving 18-19-year-olds had decreased more than that involving mature

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sou drivers. In the present study, two groups of new car drivers—trained according to the old and new programs respectively—were followed-up with four questionnaires through their first 5.5 years as drivers. A decrease in crash rates was concentrated in the 1st year of driving, and was found in multiple-vehicle accidents and manoeuvring accidents. The number of single-vehicle accidents did not change, but the overall results point to the education as leading to a lower accident risk. Source: *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, pp. 111-121, January 2002. Carstensen, Gitte.

Safety features most desirable

Results from the 2001 J.D. Power and Associates Automotive Emerging Technologies Study indicate that drivers are more and more concerned about safety and distractions, particularly cell phone use. According to the report, “consumers want safety related features more than sophisticated entertainment systems or other convenience features in their new vehicles.” Nearly seven out of eight respondents listed run-flat tires and tougher side window safety glass as features they want. See the [J.D. Power press release](#).

Pennsylvania licensing scam

A former Pennsylvania licensing examiner has been charged with 56 counts of tampering

with public records or information and 56 counts of unlawful use of a computer. The charges allege that, while employed as a license examiner, Robert Ferrari Sr. accepted amounts of between \$150 and \$1,000 in return for fraudulent licenses. Mr Ferrari was already charged with selling fraudulent commercial driver licenses. It is alleged that he used middlemen who brought him clients and that he was circumventing the checks and balances used to detect duplicate CDLs.

Stop, look, listen, and think?

Subtitled “What young children really do when crossing the road,” this study sought to provide basic information about children’s behaviour in realistic traffic situations. Fifty-six children, aged 5-6 years, took part in a ‘treasure trail’ activity. Sixty percent of the children failed to stop before proceeding from the curb onto the road. Looking for oncoming traffic was done by no more than 41% of the sample, dropping to as low as 7% in some instances. When looking *did* occur, it was initially as likely to be in the wrong direction. Source: *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, pp. 43-50, January, 2002. Zeedyk, M. Suzanne; Wallace, Linda; & Spry, Linsay.

Measuring road rage

This article describes the development of the Propensity for Angry Driving Scale (PADS), which was designed to identify individuals with the greatest propensity to become angry while driving and subsequently engage in hostile

driving behaviors or acts of “road rage.” The research supports the validity of the test, and the researchers believe it could be used to address the underlying emotional mechanisms or thought processes that trigger angry and hostile reactions while driving. Source: *Journal of Safety Research*, Vol. 32, Issue 1, pp. 1-16, March 2001. DePasquale, Jason P.; Geller, Scott; Clarke, Steven; & Littleton, Lawrence.

Red light cameras bad ...

“Proper signal timing, better signal design, and improved intersections are the real answers to the red-light-violation problem,” says the National Motorists Association (www.motorists.com). The Association is offering \$10,000 to any community that will try an engineering solution instead of the cameras and is guaranteeing that a 50% reduction in red light running will result if its recommended engineering measures are put in place. ○

Watch for
**DRIVER TIP
SHEETS**
coming soon

Driver to driver communications: some of the ideas

How can we better communicate our emotions, needs, intentions, and indeed our sense of our social norms to other drivers? Several people have come up with possibilities. Perhaps the **simplest suggestion** is for drivers to carry in their cars a laminated sign that says “Sorry,” which can be used in many situations. This idea, taken further, has led many researchers and entrepreneurs to invent methods of sending signals using text or flashing lights. (see below).

Some of these ideas are being put forth on a web site called HalfBakery.com, which is home to many half-baked ideas (and some fully baked!), which garner plenty of criticism and praise from readers. These include:

- Lights in the windshield for signalling at 4-way stops: “Go before me”
- An “I’m Sorry” light on the back of all vehicles
- An enhanced sign language using fingers, thumbs, and fist motions
- Red, yellow, and green lights that

indicate which pedals (brake/accelerator) are in use

- Brake lights that vary in intensity to indicate harder braking
- Voice activated LED text messages in the rear, or as electronic bumper stickers.

Flashing messages

Two U.S. researchers, Scott Geller, professor of psychology at Virginia Tech, and Jerry Beasley, a violence-prevention expert at Radford University, both in Southwest Virginia, have come up with an inter-vehicle communications system. After 12 months of research and development, Geller, who specializes in transportation safety, and Beasley have concluded that the distress associated with aggression and road rage can be reduced with a system of colored lights that could flash universally accepted codes meaning “Sorry”, “Please”, or “After you”. The dubbed their Inter-vehicular Communication System the

“Road Rage Reducer.”

Currently there are over a half dozen United States patents on devices that could be used to communicate words and be placed in the rear window of a vehicle. However, says Geller, “we found that the display of words can interfere with a driver’s field of view and may cause unnecessary tailgating as drivers attempt to get close enough to read them.” He cites a recent Virginia Tech study that found that paying attention to something besides driving for 15 seconds or more, or glancing more than four times from the road, increases the potential for a vehicle crash.

Unfortunately, Geller and Beasley’s device has hit several roadblocks, both legal and technical, and is not expected to reach market for some time.

(See also *War on the roads: battle for the fast lane*, page 1)

Distractions: evidence of driver ed's big failure?

On Friday, February 1, five people were killed in a crash near Washington, D.C., when the driver of a Ford Explorer lost control of her vehicle. According to reports, the driver was talking on her cell phone when her SUV hurtled over a guardrail and landed on top of a mini-van with four Canadian tourists on board. A National Transportation Safety Board spokesman said the crash is the first in which the federal agency has identified use of a cell phone as a possible factor.

The crash re-ignited the contentious debate over whether cell phone use while driving should be banned. On February 4, CNN dedicated most of its *TalkBack Live* afternoon program to the topic. A transcript of this debate is [available on the CNN web site](#).

For those familiar with the debate, there wasn't much new in the CNN program. **Patricia Pena**, an advocate for laws banning cell phone use by drivers,

told the story of how her daughter was killed by a vehicle that apparently went through a stop sign while its driver was using a cell phone. "I started a process of educating myself, and truly could not believe what I found," she told *TalkBack*. The evidence seemed to be overwhelming that wireless phones are a significant distraction for drivers.

However, one statement Pena made should be a wake-up call for traffic safety educators. When she looked at the manual for her cell phone she found one page where it said clearly "Do not use a handheld phone while driving. Park the vehicle first."

"I had never heard that before," Pena said. "So I knew I had to tell everybody what I had just learned, because I knew the cellular industry was certainly not telling you that. They were selling you this product. And all I had ever heard was just to use

your phone safely while driving, never that you are not supposed to use their products while driving."

Throughout the past century the driving task has consistently been portrayed as simple. This suited the economic needs of a society that needed an auto-mobile working population. Required training was, and is, minimal. New drivers were told they could become "pros" if they completed a novice driver program with just a few hours behind the wheel. Public service announcements simplistically exhorted drivers to "drive safely," as if all it took was just the right attitude.

We may have failed to convince the driving public in general that distractions from the driving task are a problem, because we failed to convince them that the driving task itself is something that requires a high mental work load and considerable concentration. The job we've sold the public on is one that leaves lots of spare attentional capacity for mobile phones and other onboard tasks.

There's lots of visual evidence that using cell phones produces sloppy driving, but in the area of crash risk we may be giving them a bad rap. The evidence is obviously not all in on this score, but counter arguments to the ban-cell-phones-movement were presented to *TalkBack Live* by **Adam Thierer**, director of telecommunications with the Cato Institute, a libertarian, non-profit policy research foundation (www.cato.org).

"It is an unfortunate reality of life," Thierer argued, "that, every day, there are a lot of accidents on our roads and highways in America, many of them caused by distracted driving." However, on the list of distracted driving, the causes of distracted driving, using a cell phone is pretty far down that list. In fact, we know that things like eating and drinking at the wheel, or smoking, or reading papers, or conversing with other passengers, or arguing with passengers, or yelling at your kids, those have proven to be far more distracting activities ... we have not tried to ban all of those activities or any other technologies. We have singled out cell phones all of a sudden because of a handful of tragic cases. And

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New simulator facility opens

GE Capital I-Sim, has just opened its first Driver Development Service Center in Salt Lake City. The new facility combines classroom instruction with new, state-of-the-art driving simulators using computer technology.

Whether it's truck drivers, police officers, or emergency vehicle operators, the I-Sim program focuses on real-life scenarios that train drivers how to avoid accidents without endangering life or property. The center uses a three-part training approach—classroom instruction, computer-based training with a complete driver skills evaluation, and hands-on simulation time. The company is planning new programs aimed at taxi drivers, garbage collectors, and other specialty drivers.

"We can train truck drivers to maneuver their 18-wheelers through hazardous road conditions or emergency vehicles to reach a disaster scene quickly and safely," said Mark Stulga, CEO of GE Capital I-Sim.

"Our complete program lets drivers take classroom learning straight to a life-like simulator. I-Sim technology allows instructors to correct virtual mistakes before they become reality." He also said that the company is aiming to open new Driver Development Service Centers in Denver, Chicago, Dallas, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. More information is available on the [company's web site](#).

Distractions ...

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they really are tragic, but we need to put things in perspective and base public policy on facts and not a handful of anecdotal cases.”

Thierer has a point. One aspect of the debate that has received little attention is the matter of trends in traffic fatalities and numbers of collisions over the past 6-7 years. During the late 1990's there was, by all accounts, an explosion in the numbers of drivers using phones while driving. If the cell phone problem is as bad as many believe it to be, there should be an upward surge in overall crash fatalities and crash statistics. This does not seem to have happened.

The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) shows little change in statistics over the past 7 years. Total fatal crashes in 1994 were reported at 36,254. In 1995, the total was 37,241 and in 1996, 37,494. In 2000 the total

came to 37,409. Total police-reported crashes throughout the U.S. amounted to just over 6.6 million in 1997, but only 6.4 million in 2000, and with very little variation in between.

Just recently, the Canada Safety Council (CSC) spoke out on the issue of cell phone distractions and the evidence about crashes. Proponents of laws to ban cell phone use in cars frequently cite a Canadian study which indicated that use of a cell phone while driving increased the risk of a crash by about four times. However, “the sample group in that study was small and biased,” says CSC president Emile Therien. Citing the lack of a rise in crash statistics to match the rapid increase in use of cell phones by drivers, Therien acknowledged that cell phones can be a dangerous distraction but pointed to legislation against inattentive driving as an antidote.

Obviously, cell phone use by drivers is a problem, but it is not a problem, but it is the facts indicate that the negative perception of them may be due to

cultural phenomena rather than their real risk as a crash cause.

Perhaps the biggest problem associated with cell phone use is teaching tolerance on the roadway. We need to convince the road-using public to focus on themselves rather than on blaming others for their lack of comfort while interacting with traffic. And to reduce the stress associated with technological innovation and driving we need to equip the driving public with a more sophisticated understanding of the driving task, thus enrolling them as partners in finding roadway solutions rather than mere complainers about the real or imagined transgressions of others. ○

Web forum on distractions

In the summer of 2000, the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration sponsored an Internet conference on driver distractions. The papers presented, and the resulting discussions of them, are available on the Internet.

Crash rates and cell phones: a response on statistics

The question below was put to the expert panel at the Internet conference on driver distractions sponsored by NHTSA in August 2000

Q. Figures that mobile phone use in cars involves a four-fold increase in crash risk are now commonly quoted. If this is true, where are all the crashes? There has been a massive increase in cell phone use in automobiles, but has there been a concomitant increase in crash rates?

A. The estimates to which you refer were made in an epidemiological study by a researcher at the University of Toronto. This study was able to examine crashes in detail, and by obtaining cell phone records, was able to draw an “association” between the use of the cell phone and the crash. While causality could not be established by this approach, the relationships were strong and was the basis for establishing the increase in crash

risk for both hand-held and hands-free phones. Note also that the lack of crash data does not mean there is not a problem. The data does not exist because it is not collected by the state authorities. This situation may soon change as the various jurisdictions examine the issue more closely. You should also note that other research has consistently shown the relationship between wireless phone use and a deterioration in safety relevant driving performance. I would suggest that you read some of the research papers that are included on the web site. *(Answered by Michael Goodman, NHTSA)*

The conferences Expert Panel discussions can be found on the web site.

Telematics too far ahead?

The automotive telematics revolution—navigation devices, Internet, fax machines and devices to link drivers up with businesses close to them—ran too far ahead of itself, says an editorial for TelematicsUpdate.com.

“Telematics leaders, bereft of any real market penetration or huge customer experience, are making real-world decisions without much in the way of real-world input,” writes Tim Moran.

Participants in the industry went from asking “what is telematics” to believing that getting in the industry meant instant wealth. This turned into a mad rush to bring telematics devices into the vehicle and obtain the megawealth by dominating the field.

But it has been all too much for the industry and its potential customers, says Moran. The players in the game forgot to connect with the real world of drivers and their needs. “Telematics leaders for now need to expect less immediate reward, and do more for their future users,” Moran adds. In other words, it's going to take time to educate users about the new technologies, how to use them, and how to cope with problems. ○

How Britain trains its driving instructors

In early 1998, consultants Ross Silcock Limited were appointed by the U.K. Department of Transport, Local Government, and Regions (DTLR) to carry out a review of the training and qualifications of driving instructors in Britain's Approved Driving Instructors (ADI) system. Below is a summary of a paper on the results of the study presented by David Silcock to a conference on novice driver issues held in the city of Bristol in June, 2000.

"If asked to profile the typical ADI on the basis of the survey results, I would suggest:

A middle-aged male, working by himself, with no other qualification and little inclination to undertake further training.

But then he would have a hard time affording more training as he teaches L-drivers for just 25 hours per week and only charges between £14 and £15 for a standard one-hour lesson."

David Silcock

This brief summary of the state of qualified instruction in Britain will seem quite familiar to those who are associated with instruction in many other jurisdictions around the world. At the novice level, there is frequently not much incentive to achieve high standards or advance along professional career paths.

The U.K. study assessed whether the ADI entrance exam is adequate as a test of an instructor's ability to teach learners to drive in today's conditions; whether changes were needed to the exam and if the marking system and content of the exam were up to the task of qualifying instructor candidates. The researchers also looked at ADI training.

To find out how ADIs work, the number of hours they work, how many hours they spend per student, and whether they work as part of a larger organization or on their own, Silcock commissioned a survey of ADIs.

A random sample of 1,997 people, drawn from the ADI Register, were

contacted by telephone. Over 80% of the survey questionnaires were completed by telephone, and the rest returned a postal questionnaire.

Working on their own

The survey found that, overwhelmingly, learner driver instruction in Britain is conducted by Instructors working on their own. About one quarter of surveyed ADIs taught only part time and 16% were no longer active at all. About 88% responded that they did not specialize in any segment of the novice driver market. About 2.5% said they specialized in nervous drivers, 2.2% in women drivers, and 2.0% in disabled drivers.

ADIs were asked how many hours they spent teaching Learner drivers during the previous seven days. The responses showed that just over half (50.6%) taught for 25 hours or less with a quarter (26.1%) teaching for 15 hours or less. Most (84.5%) said that this reflected a typical week. 20% reported that they had 10 or fewer pupils, with 42.8% having 21 or more L-drivers on their books.

When asked how much they charged, some were reluctant to answer but most (94%) did. A wide range of charges was reported but the standard charge was between 13 and 15 pounds (US\$18-21) for a 1-hour lesson.

Training and qualifications

Three quarters of the ADIs said they had no qualifications related to their instruction other than ADI training. However, 3.6% had a teaching qualification, 3.6% a Driving Instructor Association Diploma and 2.6% had a City and Guilds certificate. Only 6.8% answered 'yes' to the question 'are you currently undertaking further training' and less than a quarter (23.9%) had undertaken further training during the last 5 years.

"This," Silcock wrote, "is disappointing for a profession which wishes to raise its status, and is out of line with the general trend in many professions for increasing requirements for continuing professional development (CPD)."

What makes a good instructor?

The survey also looked at the personal and professional qualities essential for ADIs and at the issues of business competence and knowledge and skills.

In the knowledge/skills area, the survey found that the tests were not very difficult and not challenging enough. More essay-type questions would be preferable to the current multiple choice format, the researchers reckoned, but they also noted that implementing this might not be practical. Computerization, they suggested, offers a chance to improve the questions and increase the size of the questions bank so that learning by rote would be minimized as a factor.

"There are some qualities or skills that have been identified by the project as being necessary for a 'good ADI' which are not covered in the current exam," the report stated. "The existing test papers cover topics related to learning theory and to documents such as the Highway

continued on page 9

How Britain trains ...

Continued from page 8

Code and The Driving Manual, but nothing on Codes of Practice, Health and Safety legislation, record keeping, and general issues about running a small business. There may also be benefit, in the longer term, in considering the inclusion of hazard perception tests as part of a computerised theory examination.”

Instructional ability

In these tests, the examiner plays the role of a student driver and assess the candidate's ability to instruct. The researchers looked at this aspect of testing and also at a method in which a second examiner sits in the back and also marks the performance of the candidate. They found that the consistency between the first and second examiner was high and that the single-examiner procedure did not need to be changed.

Trainees charge same as ADIs

One of the more interesting aspects of the study was that ADIs who are starting out and operating with a Trainee License (while waiting to pass their test of instructional ability) generally charge the same for their instructing services as fully

qualified ADIs. Since there was a strong body of opinion favoring abolition of the Trainee License, researchers looked at the performance of trainee instructors compared with fully qualified instructors. They found that trainees had an overall mean pass rate of 35%, compared with 46% for grade 4, and 51% for both grades 5 and 6 ADIs. Higher grade ADIs are those who have passed advanced “check tests.” ○

Related links:

- How to become an ADI - [U.K. gov't site](http://U.K.gov't site)
- British [school of motoring](#)
- John Foote, [Grade 6 instructor](#)
- John Cave's [driving school](#)

NOTE: *The above article was developed from a conference on novice drivers held in Bristol, England, in the summer of 2000. Other topics covered included hazard perception, school programs in the UK, the role of parents, and changing attitude in young novice drivers.*

Notes from the web

(Excerpt from instructor John Foote's web site)

"There are some 27,000 ADI's on the ADI register. You should realise that not all ADI's teach full time. Some have full time jobs and teach to supplement their income, others are retired and teach to supplement their pension. Many teach full time. Fully qualified ADI's display a green licence on their car windscreen. Trainee ADI's display a pink licence; trainee ADI's have not taken the final qualifying ADI test. If you choose to learn with a trainee remember that he or she has not taken the final qualifying exam. The pass rate for the final qualifying exam is abysmal. Some driving schools rely on trainees to carry out 'day to day' driving lessons."

John foot is a Grade 6 UK driving instructor. This is the highest grade.

www.johnfoote.co.uk/adi.htm

Legal note:

In the United Kingdom, it is illegal for anyone to charge money (or kind) for giving driving instruction in a motor vehicle unless either their name is on the Register of Approved Driving Instructors, or they are the holder of a Trainee Licence issued in accordance with the Road Traffic Act. There are three parts to the ADI qualification examinations: a theory test; a practical test of driving ability; and a practical test of ability to instruct. Applicants must complete all three parts within two years of passing the theory test. If not, they start again.

See more information on ADI levels.

TRAFFIC EDUCATION IN INDIA

India's economic growth rate has been receiving praise in recent years, but success brings with it some accompanying problems—a soaring motor vehicle population.

With a motor vehicle population that's mushroomed from just 0.3 million in 1951 to a mind boggling 33 million in 1998, traffic safety has become a priority. A complicated traffic mix is a big part of the problem. A busy roadway may host as many as 40 different modes of transport, ranging from horse drawn carts, bullock carts, and hand carts to cars, trucks, buses, and motorcycles, says Rohit Baluja, president of India's [Institute of Road Traffic Education \(IRTE\)](#). “Responsibility for bringing order to this diverse mix falls on the traffic police and they have a very difficult, if not impossible job.”

Due to lack of professionalism in driver training, says Baluja, driving licenses are easily obtainable. Because of the diversity of traffic, many road users have little or no knowledge of the basic road

laws, traffic control devices, or road markings. Since records of those granted licences are not easily accessible, even to the enforcement agencies, they are not coordinated on a national scale. A driver whose licence is forfeited in one jurisdiction often tries to obtain a fresh licence from another city or state.

The Institute of Road Traffic Education was formed as a nongovernmental, non-profit organisation in December, 1991 by an interdisciplinary group of members from amongst the police, doctors, journalists, engineers, educators, ex-servicemen, architects, automobile experts, and so on.

One of the IRTE's most successful programs has been the Student Traffic Volunteer Scholarship Scheme, which started in 1998, sponsored by Shell India. Students engage in such activities as controlling traffic at busy intersections (with police supervision), monitoring traffic near schools, and education projects. ○

Guide to resources

DrivAbility Car Control Clinic

20 minutes

Available from PDE Publications or for online purchase at Drivers.com/store

Cost US\$25.00 plus \$6.00 S & H.

This 20-minute video from former racing instructor, and now driver educator, Gary Magwood, demonstrates the correlation between vision, braking, and steering.

Good techniques in these three areas, Magwood believes, can give drivers the critical edge in anticipating problems and getting out of trouble when the need arises. The theme of the video is that, with good vision skills, drivers can not only learn to anticipate problems but when they get in trouble they'll be better equipped to avoid a collision. The key, says narrator Magwood, is to unlock your eyes from the object you're trying to avoid and focus on where you want to go.

The video was developed by Magwood in the process of presenting hundreds of hands-on car control programs at universities and colleges and to the general public.

It covers the gamut of control concepts from sitting position and mirror adjustment to steering grip, steering technique, speed management, and vision techniques.

Excellent video footage demonstrates the techniques that allow drivers to use visual skills to anticipate problems and to avoid collisions if an emergency does arise. It also explores some of the myths of control and the terminology of skidding and collision avoidance.

You can't schedule emergencies, Magwood points out, but you can learn to use your eyes and manage the dynamics of the machine.

Off-road recovery is also demonstrated, as well as freeway entry and merging.

Purchase by mail, phone, or online using Visa or Mastercard. Mail:

PDE Publications, 310-5334 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario MN2 6M2.

Tel: 416-767-4885,

Email: pde@drivers.com

Online store: Drivers.com/store.

Fast Lanes—video

In "Fast Lanes," four teens returning from a day-long trip come to realize how risky behaviors impact their lives—and those around them. After a near accident leaves them stranded, they wait in a thrift store for a lift home and become involved in a wacky board game. As they play the game, the actors help debunk some popular misconceptions teens have about aggressive driving, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, driving without safety belts, and other risky automotive and social behaviors. Two clips are available online for previewing. The video is free from the Insurance Education Foundation web site.

AAAFTS video and photo library

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has created an online library of materials. Visitors can preview the latest videos, watch archived training films from the 1950s and 60s, and hear public service announcements. The library also contains photos of bicyclists, skaters, motorists, and pedestrians, and these are free for use upon getting permission from the Foundation. Also, check out their catalog of other items, including over 20 videos, CDROMs, and other products.

See the AAAFTS web site. ○

Delivering driver ed: emphasize in-car

"Eight years of experience has told me that young students are much more ready and able to learn in the car," says Dale O. Ritzel in a recent article in the *ADTSEA Chronicle*. "In the classroom they are not primed or particularly interested, whereas in the car the teacher has their undivided attention and zeal to learn."

Dr. Ritzel, who is based at Southern Illinois University, proposes a radical change in the format of current driver education programs. He would like to see much more in-car time and much less classroom time. In restructuring DE, he would "question literally every concept now being taught," and he would also ensure that parents were brought into the process at a very early stage.

Ritzel would slash the traditional 30 hours of class time to ten hours of class and ten hours of driving, and perhaps five or more hours of observation. That would be the first level of driver ed. After the young novice had driven for a minimum specified time (say three months) and had a specified minimum time of supervised driving, he or she would enter an intermediate program with the same ten, ten, and five format.

"The focus here would be on more sophisticated procedures to demonstrate aspects of the Smith System, IPDE, etc., in class and in actual driving situations. Parents would again be an integral part of the process, particularly observing in the car."

He also recommends that, prior to a road test, each student spend one hour under the supervision of a certified driver education teacher, preferably with a parent present. The teacher would then provide a standardized written critique which the driver would be required to present to the Department of Motor Vehicles, along with the application for the road test. This would provide assistance to the examiner in evaluating the driver during the road test.

Readers can go to www.drivers.com/discussions to comment on any article in *Driver/Education* newsletter.

Update on Research

Drivers' biased perceptions of speed and safety campaign messages

In New Zealand, 113 drivers were surveyed for their perceptions of driving speed to compare self-reported average speed, perceived average-other speed, and the actual average speed. The researchers found that drivers exaggerated the perceived speed of others, and drivers who have a biased perception of their own speed relative to others are more likely to ignore advertising campaigns encouraging people not to speed. Source: *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Vol. 33, Issue 5, pp. 629-640, September, 2001. Walton, D., & McKeown, P.C.

Novice drivers' accidents, violations

A study compared accident and offence rates of 28,500 novice drivers in Finland. Questionnaire results were controlled according to sex, age, and distance driven. Young novice drivers and especially males showed more problems connected to more complex levels of driving behavior than middle-aged novice drivers. Female drivers showed more problems connected to vehicle handling skills. Source: *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Vol. 33, Issue 6, pp. 759-769, November, 2001. Laapotti, Sirkku; Keskinen, Esko; Hatakka, Mika; & Katila, Ari.

More women driving, but still crashing far less than men

More women are taking to the roads, and they are driving more miles than ever before. So says a new report from the Traffic Injury Research Foundation and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, entitled "Trends in fatal crashes involving female drivers, 1975-1998." In fact, according to the study, the number of licensed women drivers has increased by 55% since 1975. The result of this increased exposure to the roadways has resulted in more women being fatally injured in crashes—up 60% since 1975. However, men still crash almost twice as much as women per mile driven (1.8 times), and this has remained fairly steady for over 25 years. The researchers examined data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System, an annual census of all fatal traffic crashes in the United States. The study also considered changing demographics, travel patterns, exposure, and alcohol use of drivers. Researchers also found that

men are more likely to be in crashes involving a single vehicle and crashes that occur at night and on weekends. The 12 page report is available for \$25 from [TIRF](#), or free from the [IIHS](#). Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Arlington, VA. 2001. Mayhew, D.R.; Ferguson, S.A.; Desmond, K.J.; & Simpson, H.M.

Do young males really take more risks?

Researchers have fairly consistently found that young men take more risks when driving than young women. However, a new study, using a less-common methodology, has found both genders equally prone to risk taking. Sixty-one drivers were observed unobtrusively, using four, tiny concealed cameras in the car, and using computer-collected data on safety-belt use, turn signal use, speed and speed changes, and following distance. The findings indicate that driver age and "type A" personality characteristics were significant predictors of speed and following distance. The researchers found that risky drivers share a common characteristic identified as aggressive/impatient. They suggest that the lack of a gender difference may be because almost all previous studies relied upon self-report questionnaires, and young men are more willing to report their risky behaviours, while women tend to want to portray themselves as law-abiding. Source: An instrumented vehicle assessment of problem behavior and driving style: Do younger males really take more risks? *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, pp. 51-64, January 2002. Boyce, T., & Geller, S.

Heavier people suffer more in crashes

If any of us need another reason to get walking or hit the gym, a new study indicates that increased body weight is associated with increased risk of mortality and increased risk of severe injury. In the study, researchers examined data for crashes involving 27,000 people for which the Crashworthiness Data System had weight and height data available. They found the odds ratio for death was 1.013 for each kilogram increase in body weight. Both higher weights and higher Body Mass Index (a measure of obesity) resulted in higher injury and death rates. Source: The relationship between body weight and risk of death and serious injury in motor vehicle crashes. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Vol. 34, Issue 2, pp. 221-228, March 2002. Mock, C.; Grossman, D.; Kaufman, R.; Mack, C.; & Rivara, F. ○

Driver/Education and Drivers.com

Information overload? Too much information coming at us, impossible to sort it all out. *Driver/Education* is now your guide to related information on the web in addition to our specially written content.

Our *Drivers.com* web site is a good example of this. Eleven years ago, when the first issue of *Driver/Education* was published, there were not many information sources for driver educators. Apart from a few trade association newsletters, this was it. Now they all have web sites, and educators can access hundreds of related web sites, including *Drivers.com*, for free. *That's if you have the time!*

Drivers.com is now a huge information resource on all aspects of driving—and getting larger by the day. We have a rapidly growing section for professional drivers, including a career center where professional drivers and employers can meet (drivers.com/jobs). After only 6 weeks in operation there are now over 600 resumes posted.

Driver/Education newsletter is a window on this vast world of information. We search the Internet and other sources, distill out the important information we find, and present you with a digest of information 4 times per year. We send subscribers a print version and provide a password for access to the online version and back issues.

NEW LOOK:

Starting with the last issue, this newsletter is posted on the Drivers.com web site in the same format you see here (using Adobe PDF). Text underlined in the print version represents hyperlinks in the online version. This means easier navigation and expands the newsletter with links to resources throughout the web.

COMING EVENTS

ITS 2002: THE TWELFTH ANNUAL MEETING AND EXPOSITION OF ITS AMERICA— April 29-May 2, 2002. Long Beach, California.

Contact: ITS Meetings America Department
400 Virginia Avenue S.W., Suite 800 Washington, D.C.,
20024-2730

Tel: 202-484-4847 Fax: 202-484-3483

E-Mail: sftizgerald@its.org

Web site: <http://www.itsa.org/annualmeeting.html>

CCMTA ANNUAL MEETING—May 12-16, 2002. Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Contact: Audrey Henderson, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators/ Conseil canadien des administrateurs en transport motorisé
2323 St. Laurent Blvd. Ottawa, ON K1G 4J8
Tel: (613) 736-1003 Fax: (613) 736-1395

E-mail: ccmta-secretariat@ccmta.ca

Web site: <http://www.ccmta.ca>

AMERICAN DRIVER AND TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (ADTSEA)—Aug.

4-8, 2002. Overland Park, Kansas (near Kansas City). Meeting of high school and commercial driving school representatives from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Usually the largest of its kind in North America. For information contact Joan Peterson, at Kansas Dept. of Education, Tel: 785-296-3201, or visit the ADTSEA web site at http://adtsea.iup.edu/adtsea/Conf/2002_conf.htm

ICADTS-T'2002: 16th International Conference on Alcohol, Drugs, and Traffic Safety— August 4-9, 2002, Montréal, Québec. Contact: Études et stratégies en sécurité routière

Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec 333, boulevard Jean Lesage, N-6-41 Case Postale 19600, Québec, QC G1K-8J6

Téléphone (418) 528-4095 Fax (418) 644-0339

Email: claudedussault@saaq.gouv.qc.ca

Web site: http://www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca/t2002/index_a.html

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATORS (AAMVA)

Annual international conference—August 18-21, 2002. Delta Beesborough Hotel and Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Contact: Dianne Graham, (703) 522-4200
Exhibit Contact: Bill Dallas, (703) 522-4200

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