

Keep Safe by Being in the Know

Spotlight Put on Highway Law Awareness

When it comes to staying safe on the road, it helps to know the laws. Whether it's a newbie behind the wheel or a long-time motorist, staying up-to-date on the driving regulations should be a priority.

This month's The Road Ahead newsletter puts the spotlight on four safety areas and serves as a

review for the pertaining laws — **making room for bicyclists, obeying traffic signs, wearing seat belts, and driving in work zones.**

These topics are brought into focus on the statewide stage through **Highway Safety Law Awareness Week**, observed February 21 to 27.



Drivers Are Reminded to Share the Road

Bicycling is becoming a more popular across the country and in Pennsylvania.

For exercise, leisure, and commuting, more residents and visitors are picking two-wheeled transportation.

Some of this activity takes place on pathways dedicated to cyclists and pedestrians. Other times, bicycle users must traverse the same roadways occupied by cars and trucks.

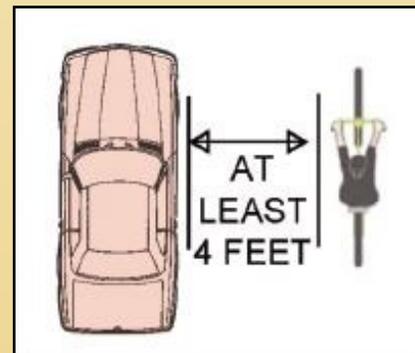
Drivers must remember that bicyclists may be traveling

along the shoulder or right side of the lane. **Whenever passing a person on a bicycle, drivers should move over four feet.**

Motorists should pass at a careful and prudent reduced speed.

When safe to do so, it is legal to cross the center double yellow line if necessary to provide the required four feet when passing a bicycle.

In 2014, there were 1,309 bicycle crashes with 1,298



injuries and 19 deaths.

The four-foot passing law was put into effect April 2, 2012 to help ensure the safety of bicyclists and to avoid such incidents.



In 2015, Pennsylvania ranked as the 12th most bicycle friendly state in the country by the League of American Bicyclists. This was due in part because of regulations like the four-foot passing law of April 2012.

Buckle Up Teenagers — It's the Law

Anyone age 8 to 17 must be secured in a seat belt whenever riding anywhere in a vehicle, according to a law passed in 2003.



That's because it is proven that combination lap/shoulder seat belts can save lives.

They reduce the risk of fatal injuries to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injuries by 50 percent.

The seat belt usage rate in Pennsylvania was 84 percent in 2014.

So who's not buckling up? According to the online resource JustDrivePA.org, the groups most like to forego using a seat belt are those age 16 to 24, African Americans, males, and drivers traveling alone or using a pickup truck.

National statistics show that for every one percent increase in seat belt usage, eight to 12 lives can be saved in crashes.

In Pennsylvania, the use of seat belts could have reduced the number of crash fatalities in 2014 by more than 200 and the number of injuries by nearly 2,500.

Wearing a seat belt is the single most effective thing for reducing the risk of death or injury.

So teens, remember to buckle up every time — it's the law.



GIVE OUR WORKERS A BRAKE!

Slow Down in Work Zones

Motorists in an active work zone who are caught driving 11 mph or more above the posted speed limit, or are in a crash and convicted of failing to drive at a safe speed, automatically lose their license for 15 days.

Fines for certain traffic violations — speeding, impaired driving, and failure to obey traffic devices — are doubled for active work zones. Also, the law provides for up to five years of additional jail time for drivers convicted of homicide by vehicle for a crash that occurs in an active work zone.

In 2014, 377 suspensions were imposed on motorists for work-zone violations.

Here's Your Sign

Question — what does a Road Closed sign mean? The answer may seem obvious — the road is closed — yet motorists ignore such notifications sometimes and travel into dangerous scenarios like high water and unfinished pavement.

As part of Highway Safety Law Awareness Week, the PennDOT is reminding drivers to obey all traffic signs.

Instructions to slow down, merge lanes, not make U-turns, use headlights, take a detour, and others, are put into place with the safety of motorists in mind.

Following traffic signs is another way to ensure everyone makes it to their destination safely.