

news & notes

MILLENNIALS AND DRIVING

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety says that 88 percent of Millennials engaged in at least one risky behavior behind the wheel in the past 30 days. The findings come as U.S. traffic deaths rose to 35,092 in 2015, an increase of more than seven percent. That's the largest single-year increase in 5 decades.

Here are some specifics from the AAA research:

- Drivers aged 19 to 24 were nearly twice as likely as all drivers to report having typed or sent a text message or e-mail while driving, and they were 1.6 times as likely to report having read a text message or e-mail while driving in the last 30 days.
- Nearly 12 percent of Millennial drivers said they feel it is acceptable to drive 10 miles per hour over the speed limit in a school zone.
- About one-half of young drivers reported driving through a light that had just turned red when they could have stopped.



"Oh yeah, I totally get the 'don't-drive-and-phone' safety thing now. Seatbelts, too."



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Dangers of carbon monoxide

What do you know about CO?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, and poisonous gas. Exposure can be fatal. CO is a common, hazardous substance. It's produced when organic fuels are burned in an area with a limited supply of oxygen. The most common occurrence is incomplete burning in an airtight building.

During the winter season, you must be extra cautious of CO dangers that may be present as you heat your home or office. CO is produced by the incomplete burning of any material that contains carbon, including gasoline, oil, propane, natural gas, coal, and wood. CO is produced in workplaces and homes during the operation of equipment such as furnaces, space heaters, water heaters, gas clothes dryers, gas ranges, fireplaces, and all motor vehicles, including forklift trucks.

What are the signs of CO poisoning?

Be alert for CO poisoning symptoms—and act quickly! Symptoms may resemble those of the flu, such as dizziness and vertigo, nausea, flushed face, headache, weakness, irritability, sleepiness, confusion, and chest pains for people who have heart conditions. In the event you or someone else is exposed to CO, get to fresh air immediately! Seek immediate medical attention if you think you have inhaled CO.

Do's and don'ts to remember

DO keep all fuel-burning equipment and appliances maintained and operating properly. Be sure your furnaces have routine servicing.

DO vent all fuel-burning equipment and appliances outside. Inspect vents to be sure they're not blocked. Check that exhaust fans blow out and away from air intake vents so they don't bring combustion products back into the building. Be especially careful in energy-efficient buildings, which may have minimal ventilation.

DO maintain vehicles properly. Inspect them for exhaust and pipe leaks and body rot, which could allow CO into the vehicle.

DO install detectors to alert you to dangerous CO levels, since CO can't be seen or smelled.

DON'T forget to change the batteries in your CO detectors regularly.

DON'T let vehicles run in an enclosed area. Accidental deaths result every winter from simply warming cars in closed garages.

National Ladder Safety Month

March is National Ladder Safety Month. According to NIOSH, ladder incidents cause more than 15,000 nonfatal injuries involving days away from work and about 34,000 nonfatal injuries treated in emergency departments. Here are tips from OSHA to keep you safe while using a ladder:

- Maintain ladders free of oil, grease, and other slip hazards.
- Do not load ladders beyond their maximum intended load or beyond the manufacturer's rated capacity.
- Do not use ladders on slippery surfaces unless they are secured or have slip-resistant feet.
- Take steps to secure ladders in areas where they can be displaced by work activities.
- Keep areas clear around the top and bottom of ladders.
- Do not move, shift, or extend ladders while in use.
- Use ladders equipped with nonconductive side rails if the worker or the ladder could contact exposed, energized electrical equipment.
- Face the ladder when moving up or down.
- Use at least one hand to grasp the ladder when climbing.
- Do not carry objects or loads that could cause loss of balance and falling.



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Ladder safety quiz

Test what you know

Choose the correct response for the following statements.

1. Ladder accidents rarely result in serious injuries. **True or False**
2. It doesn't matter what kind of ladder you use as long as it's in good condition. **True or False**
3. Before you use a ladder, you should make sure it is the right height for the job and will support your weight. **True or False**
4. You can safely use an extension ladder with a loose rung or frayed rope as long as you know about the problem and are careful. **True or False**
5. When you set up an extension ladder, the base should be:
 - a. 1 foot (ft) from the wall for every 2 ft of height
 - b. 1 ft from the wall for every 3 ft of height
 - c. 1 ft from the wall for every 4 ft of height
6. When you set up a ladder, never lean it against a surface that can't support the weight. **True or False**

ANSWERS 1. False. Some ladder accidents result in disabling injuries or death. 2. False. Even if the ladder is in perfect condition, you could still have an accident if you use the wrong ladder for the job. 3. True. Check the label on the ladder and take into account the weight of tools and materials as well as your own weight. 4. False. Never use a ladder in poor condition. Remove it from service, tag it, and report it. 5. c. The 4-to-1 rule says that the base should be 1 ft from the wall for every 4 ft of height. 6. True.

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Choosing a contractor

Spring into home improvements

Are you planning on fixing up your house or doing a landscaping project this spring? Protect your checkbook by following these steps for choosing a contractor from the Montana Department of Justice – Consumer Protection Division:

1. **Research your project** so you know what's involved, what materials are needed, and how long these jobs usually take.
2. **Get names of several contractors** from friends and relatives, ads, and the Yellow pages.
3. **Check references** for the contractors you seriously consider. It's easier to get customer references when you've chosen contractors used by friends and relatives.
4. **Get bids in writing** from your finalists. Describe in detail the work you want done—and insist on specificity in written bids.
5. **Compare bids.**
6. **Check the contractor's license.**
7. **Check the contractor's insurance.**
8. **Check the contractor's bonding company.**
9. **Get a contract in writing.** Make sure it specifies dates, prices, work details, licenses, permits, cleanup, guarantees, and warranties.
10. **Inspect the project** throughout its duration to make sure everything is being done according to the contract. Put every complaint in writing so you have recourse if the project goes awry.