

Driving Habits, How Good Are Yours?

The first GMAC national Drivers Test study of 4,900 licensed drivers revealed that millions of Americans lack basic knowledge of rules of the road and safe automobile operation. The study also evaluated everyday driving habits, revealing dangerous driving behaviors.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), a nonprofit research organization funded by auto insurers, areas where respondents to the study showed lack of knowledge or a propensity for unsafe practices are also common causes of auto accidents.

The survey asked 20 standard written driving test questions (taken from state driving tests). The second section asked 20 behavioral and situational driving scenarios and insurance related questions. Some of the key findings:

- One in ten drivers on the road today failed to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the rules of the roads. If tested today, they would fail a test similar to one required to get a driver's license.
- Rhode Island and the Northeast have the least knowledgeable drivers.
- Younger drivers (18-24 years of age) are most likely to fail a written driver's test.
- At least 20% of drivers do not know that a pedestrian has the right of way at a marked or unmarked crosswalk. According to IIHS, research shows that 43% of all pedestrian injuries and 22% of fatal injuries to pedestrians occur in collisions with motor vehicles at intersections.
- The nation's least knowledgeable drivers (the Northeast) are the most likely to speed.
- Younger drivers are most likely to speed.
- One-third of drivers who drink admit that they would drink and drive even if they suspected they were over the legal limit.
- Half of all Americans do not know how to merge into heavy traffic.
- Sixty percent change lanes on a highway without using their blinker.

The study is a terrific resource for your next safety meeting to raise awareness of the need for defensive driving and as an aid in helping staff to review their driving habits, as well as the rules of the road. See the following:

- http://www.gmacinsurance.com/SafeDriving/2006/NDT2006_ES.asp
- <http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2005/05/26/55472.htm>

You can also take the survey at the GMAC site, which is a good way to begin the safety meeting. You might also obtain copies of your state DMV driving rules for all staff members.