

# move

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Best practices for license suspension reviewed

Update to S2S improves safety

Operational changes due to COVID-19

## A TERRIFYING TREND

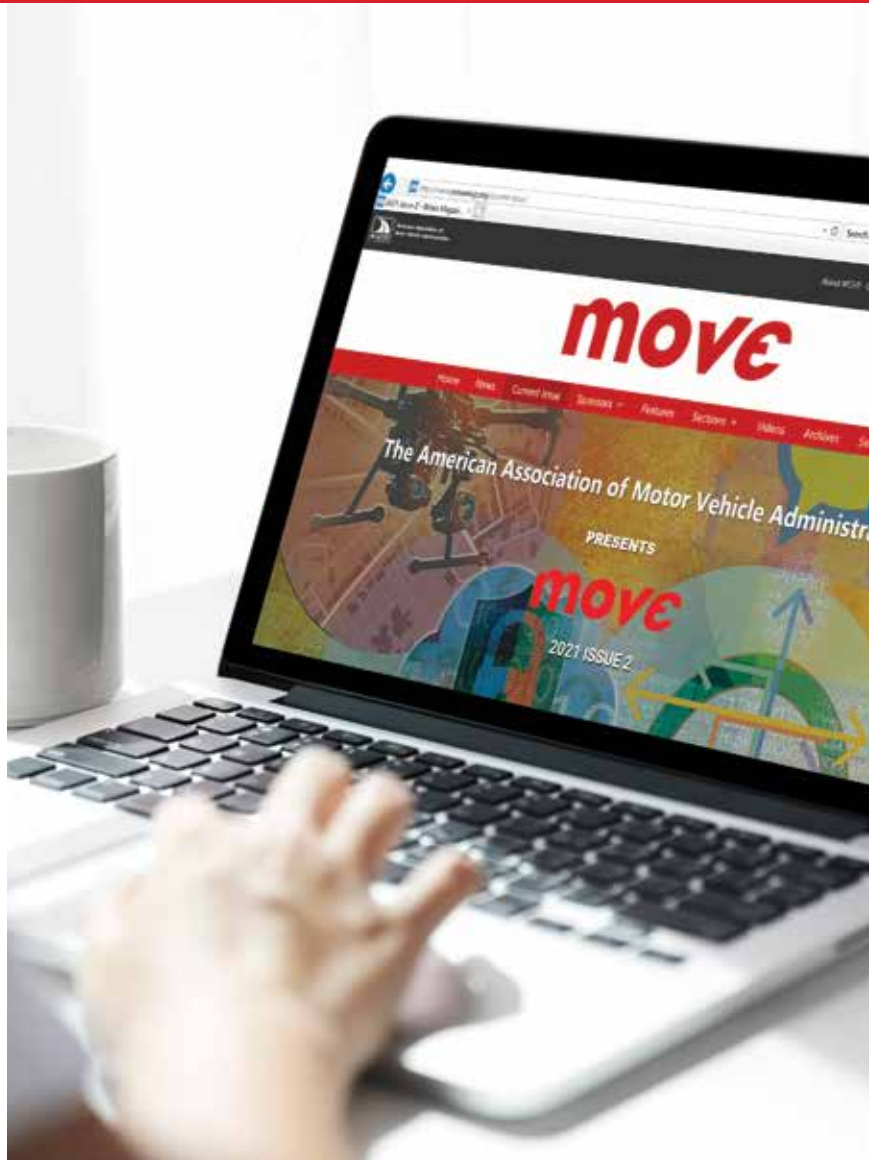
COVID-weary jurisdictions grapple with a secondary pandemic: dangerous driving

# move

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*Safe drivers  
Safe vehicles  
Secure identities  
Saving lives!*



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Reducing Suspended Drivers and Alternative  
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American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators

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BY MATT ALDERTON

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BY ANDREW CONNER



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Don't forget to visit [MOVEmag.org](https://move.org) to read the latest web exclusives.



**AAMVACAST EPISODE 45** AAMVA speaks with Robert Molloy, Director of the Office of Highway Safety at the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), about NTSB's contributions to highway safety and our shared mission of saving lives.



# Rough Roads

*IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DRIVER—AND YOUR INFLUENCE*

**D**uring the pandemic, roadway deaths in parts of North America defied logic by increasing to exceed 2019 levels in the face of lower vehicle miles traveled, even though businesses closed, work shifted from office to home for many and people drove less. We learn more about the deadly issue in this issue of *MOVE*.

Belts, booze, speed ... the words are shorthand for three major factors that characterized many of the fatal and serious injury vehicle crashes during the pandemic. The words are a familiar refrain that traffic safety experts have highlighted over many years, describing persistent driver behaviors common across serious and fatal crashes. Education and training, peer and parental support, and technology all help us remind drivers to increase the use of seatbelts, eliminate drinking

and driving, and use safe speeds when behind the wheel.

Other factors like roadway design and vehicle technology are also essential to solving the problem to reduce the risk of people suffering serious injury or death on our roadways. Canada's Road Safety Strategy and the initiative of a national U.S. coalition known as Road to Zero offer comprehensive strategies for jurisdictions and nations to alter the deadly path innocent victims and careless operators find themselves on.

Among the key strategies that also impact unsafe driving is one within the frame of influence of the AAMVA community. It is the exchange of driver conviction and license withdrawal information among DMVs and timely, clear and accurate access to that data by DMV personnel, law enforcement, courts, prosecutors and employers. Driving-related conviction and license withdrawal histories are important indicators of the likelihood a driver will operate a vehicle unsafely. These stakeholders rely on the information to determine if that driver is eligible for a license, should keep or lose their privilege to drive, or be employed in work that requires driving.

Timely and accurate exchange of this data is a core function within the authority of DMVs. It is a mandated function for DMVs who license commercial drivers. For noncommercial driver records, at least 44 states agree to provide this exchange under the U.S. Drivers License Compact. All Canadian jurisdictions have made a similar commitment under the Canadian Driver License Agreement.

The challenge of paper exchange has hampered many U.S. jurisdictions from carrying out this function to their satisfaction. The *MOVE* article on driver history records accessed through the State to State (S2S) service describes how U.S. jurisdictions using S2S have committed to enabling this exchange electronically, mirroring what they do under the Commercial Driver License Information System (CDLIS) program. Readers will learn how the service works and the steps a jurisdiction can take to leverage the resource in the interest of roadway safety.

AAMVA's members, be they DMV, law enforcement, IT, AAMVA staff or associate members, influence drivers and driver safety and work hard to continue to expand their ability to do so in a fair and thorough manner. [m](#)



resources

*BEST PRACTICES FOR LICENSE  
SUSPENSION REVIEWED  
TO ADDRESS BURDEN OF  
“DRIVING WHILE POOR”*

BY MYRNA TRAYLOR

Cutting



In 2018, AAMVA published its guide, *Reducing Suspended Drivers and Alternative Reinstatement Best*

*Practices*, which recommended that jurisdictions

limit the suspension of driving privileges to those drivers who commit highway safety-related violations.

Part of the reasoning behind these recommendations was that younger drivers often had a hard time paying fines and court fees for offenses such as school truancy or parking tickets, and it was more important to suspend the licenses of people who had driving violations that were directly related to safety on the roads.

Marcy Coleman, assistant administrator for the Safety and Regulations Division of Motor Vehicles for Rhode Island, who was a member of the 2017 working group, points out another compelling reason for re-examining suspension practices: “It becomes clear that an extraordinarily large amount of resources are being shifted away from the MVA’s main focus of ensuring that individuals who are licensed are capable of safely operating motor vehicles. In the event that suspensions based on non-highway safety-related offenses could be reduced or even eliminated, MVAs would save time and money.”

While some jurisdictions adopted these guidelines in the years since, many others have not. The problem of license suspensions for failure to pay is now seen as a punishment that falls disproportionately on citizens with fewer means to pay, who are then caught in a downward spiral of unpaid fines and fees.

In light of this, several AAMVA subject matter experts came together to revise and strengthen the best practices recommendations. Brian Ursino, director of Law Enforcement for AAMVA, was part of the team.

“This has been a hot topic nationally, particularly within state legislatures, where bills have been introduced that address or attempt to address the phenomenon that many people refer to as ‘driving while

poor,” Ursino reports. “Our original policy recommendation was that jurisdictions only suspend for highway safety violation reasons, and not suspend for non-driving reasons. That remains our position, but we found upon hearing these conversations throughout the country, that it didn’t go far enough.”

The group’s revised recommendation separates offenses into two categories: failure to pay (FTP) and failure to appear (FTA), urging that license suspension be used only for FTA violations when the underlying offense was related to highway safety. Similarly, jurisdictions should use existing tests for indigency in FTP cases before suspending driving privileges. “If a person comes into court and they can demonstrate that they meet the court’s definition of indigency,” Ursino says, “then the DMV, in that circumstance, should not suspend for failure to pay regardless of what the reason for the suspension was.”

“Another way to say it is drivers who cannot fully pay fines or court costs on demand may receive additional time to pay and receive a waiver of some or all the amounts,” Ursino continues. “The court may impose a payment plan or

choose to entirely waive the fee or the fine based on whether or not that person meets their definition of indigency. It’s our view that jurisdictions should adopt this policy. In this way, sanctions will not disproportionately impact the economically disadvantaged forever.”

“This edition also goes into detail regarding the special considerations that should be given to our professional drivers holding CDLs,” adds Coleman.

Furthermore, says Ursino, “Our research, which sampled suspended driver data from eight states, revealed that approximately 40% of all suspension actions were for non-highway safety reasons—those are the ones we’re trying to eliminate. We can reduce the number of suspended drivers on the roads by approximately 40% without jeopardizing traffic safety, and that’s the key. Reducing the number of suspended drivers reduces workloads for the DMV administratively, and reduces workload for law enforcement officers who stop these drivers at roadside.”

The new best practices were approved by the AAMVA board in April and published in May 2021, as *Reducing Suspended Drivers and Alternative Reinstatement Best Practices*, Edition 3, May 2021. **m**

-40% of all suspension actions were for non-highway safety reasons.

## go online

TO ACCESS REDUCING SUSPENDED DRIVERS AND ALTERNATIVE REINSTATEMENT BEST PRACTICES, EDITION 3, VISIT [AAMVA.ORG/BEST-PRACTICES-AND-MODEL-LEGISLATION](https://AAMVA.ORG/BEST-PRACTICES-AND-MODEL-LEGISLATION).

LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST ON THIS TOPIC: [BIT.LY/AAMVACAST58](https://BIT.LY/AAMVACAST58).

# Now Boarding: **REAL ID**

# MISSOURI ESTABLISHES NEW DRIVER LICENSE OFFICE AT AIRPORT TO PROVIDE REAL IDs

BY SCOTT MASON



Obtaining a REAL ID has proved to be somewhat challenging for consumers. Since the program was first established in 2005, various administrative hurdles and stringent requirements have resulted in citizens shying away from even attempting to acquire a REAL ID. As a result, motor vehicle administrations have been trying to come up with ideas on how to make the process smoother for everyone involved.

Missouri is one of those jurisdictions, as it has seen less-than-ideal acceptance rates, meaning the percentage of customers who are coming into driver licensing locations and obtaining a REAL ID.

"Missouri was a late adopter of the REAL ID program," says Joseph Plaggenberg, director of the Motor Vehicle and Driver Licensing Division at the Missouri Department of Revenue. "We adopted the program and implemented it in March 2019, so we have been processing REAL ID-compliant transactions for a little over two years now. What we've seen over this time is about a 33% acceptance rate."

## A CONVENIENT SOLUTION

With an original deadline extension of October 2021, Plaggenberg and his team realized there was a need to raise that number to get more Missourians outfitted with this new credential. They envisioned a perfect opportunity to provide this service at the place where you'd need a REAL ID the most: the airport.

"We opened a full-service office in the St. Louis Lambert International Airport in May 2021," Plaggenberg says. "It was the idea of our director, Ken Zellers—he previously worked in the private sector and has a knack for operational excellence. He wanted to marry the point of ingress and egress for travelers where REAL ID really impacts people."

The goal was to have the office be open temporarily off of Terminal 1 (the largest terminal at the airport) until that October 2021 deadline, when REAL ID was set to go into effect and would be required for travel.

Just recently, the Department of Homeland Security extended the REAL ID compliance deadline to May 2023, and Plaggenberg says that Lambert Airport office may stay open longer to accommodate customers past the original October 2021 closing date.

## MAKING IT WORK

There were, of course, challenges that needed to be overcome for this plan to come to fruition.

"The two biggest issues we faced were identifying the necessary funding to be able to open the office on a temporary basis like this, along with the handling of temporary space permits," Plaggenberg says.

But Rhonda Hamm-Niebruegge, director of the St. Louis Lambert International Airport, shared the vision of the jurisdiction and helped mitigate some of these issues.

"She was very much aligned with our plan; so much so that the temporary space

permit that was issued by Lambert for the work area in the airport was for a mere \$1," Plaggenberg says. "They said, 'You know what? We don't want to charge to be able to provide this essential service at our facilities.'" This agreement helped push the initiative forward, saving the jurisdiction from budget and administrative headaches.

Plaggenberg sees the opening of this office as a huge boon for customers in the jurisdiction and can hopefully change some misconceptions people may have about motor vehicle departments.

"The public perception is that the DMV cannot be efficient," he says. "But I think this program really accentuates that government isn't sitting in an ivory tower; rather, we are really trying every single day to improve our relationship with the community and the way that we provide services to the people." **m**

*"We are really trying every single day to improve our relationship with the community and the way that we provide services to the people."*

## JOSEPH PLAGGENBERG

Director of the Motor Vehicle and Driver Licensing Division at the Missouri Department of Revenue



# Modernization Benefits Everyone

## MINNESOTA DPS AND FAST ENTERPRISES PARTNER TO UPGRADE SERVICES

BY JILL RULE

The relationship between the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) and FAST Enterprises began in 2018, when modernization was needed in driver services to meet the REAL ID legislation deadline. While the system needed to launch on an extreme time crunch, FAST rose to the challenge and met the deadline. Later, when Minnesota mandated an update to its vehicle services program, FAST was selected.

"We already had great experience with FAST, and with them already managing our driver services system, it was an easy and informed choice," says Emma Corrie, director of Driver Vehicle Services at DPS. As of November 16, 2020, Minnesota has one integrated system of record for driver and vehicle services.

*"The virtual lobby is now integral to how we do business."*

### EMMA CORRIE

Director of Driver Vehicle Services at Minnesota Department of Public Safety

Minnesota DPS is shifting to a virtual model with more self-service programs, such as pre-approval for REAL IDs and virtual training for staff.

These changes and updates didn't come without challenges—the pandemic caused many issues. However, working together, FAST and DPS were able to implement several programs with great success. Due to health concerns, social distancing and limiting in-person contact was vital. So FAST created a virtual lobby for customers.

"The lobby allows a customer to scan a QR code [to check in], and then they can wait anywhere, allowing people to disperse," says Ken Buna, associate partner of FAST Enterprises. The customer then receives a text when it is their turn, which limits contact with DPS staff and other customers. While this was created in response to COVID, it isn't temporary, Corrie says. "The virtual lobby is now integral to how we do business."

In a continued effort to limit in-person contact, FAST also created a pre-approval process for REAL IDs. "We implemented the ability for a customer to pre-apply for their driver's license and submit their required documentation online," Buna says. DPS staff can then review those documents to make sure they are valid. If the documents don't meet the requirements, an e-mail is sent informing the customer of any issues prior to visiting an office. According to Buna, DPS is receiving "around 200 applications on average each day," shortening transaction time at DPS offices. Customers are happier because they no longer run the risk of having the wrong documents.

FAST not only helped DPS with public services, but internal pandemic needs as well. They were able to pivot all classroom training for the new vehicle services software to 100% virtual. DPS business partners and DVS staff could train securely anytime, anywhere. This transition made these trainings archivable and will have a life beyond roll-out of the system for new employees.

In fact, COVID and the forced shift to a virtual/self-service model has created an appetite for change.

"When you have an adverse situation, if you can mine gold out of it, why wouldn't you hold on to it?" Corrie asks. So many of these "temporary" programs will have life post-pandemic. And people in Minnesota have had positive responses to the efficiency these online options present.

While a few programs allowed during COVID will end due to legislative requirements, modernization has made things easier and faster with higher accuracy. Additionally, since FAST has implemented programs for 17 other states, these jurisdictions can share information and exchange best practices, making services stronger across the board. [m](#)



# OPERATIONAL CHANGES DUE TO COVID-19

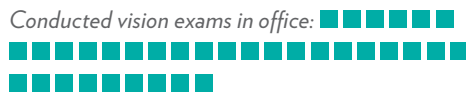
BY AAMVA'S DATA LADY, JANICE DLUZYNSKI




Some recent surveys have asked how operations have changed during the pandemic. All surveys have additional questions that provide more information. Full details can be found at: [AAMVA.ORG/SURVEY/USER/SEARCH.ASPX](https://aamva.org/survey/user/search.aspx).

## VISION WAIVERS – PRE- & POST-COVID-19 37 RESPONSES

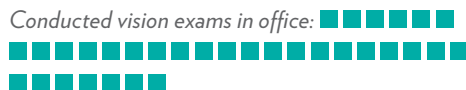
### HOW DID YOUR JURISDICTION MANAGE VISION EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CUSTOMERS PRIOR TO COVID-19?

Conducted vision exams in office: 


Accepted documentation from health care provider: 


Managed through a customer's attestation that they have had a vision exam within "X" years: 

### HOW IS YOUR JURISDICTION MANAGING VISION EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CUSTOMERS DURING COVID-19?

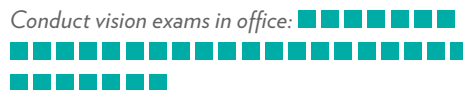
Conducted vision exams in office: 

Accepted documentation from health care provider: 


Managed through a customer's attestation that they have had a vision exam within "X" years: 

Waiving vision exam requirements through statute: 

## HOW DOES YOUR JURISDICTION PLAN ON MANAGING VISION EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR CUSTOMERS POST-COVID-19?

Conduct vision exams in office: 

Accept documentation from health care provider: 

Managed through a customer's attestation that they have had a vision exam within "X" years: 

## COVID-19 & SERVICE OPERATIONS – APPOINTMENTS 30 RESPONSES

### DURING THE PANDEMIC, DOES YOUR STATE DO WALK-IN, APPOINTMENTS OR A COMBI- NATION OF BOTH FOR DRIVER'S LICENSE AND ID SERVICE?

Walk-in only: 

Appointments only: 

Combination of walk-in and appointments: 

## NONCOMMERCIAL SKILLS TEST CHANGES – COVID-19 32 RESPONSES

### HAS YOUR STATE MADE ANY ACCOMMODATIONS OR ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR NON- COMMERCIAL SKILLS TEST IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19?

Yes: 

No: 

## SERVICES DURING PANDEMIC – LICENSING 34 RESPONSES

### DURING THE PANDEMIC, FROM THE ONSET TO THIS SURVEY, DID YOUR DEPARTMENT HAVE TO STOP PROVIDING DRIVER LICENSE SERVICES FOR SOME PERIOD OF TIME THROUGH YOUR OFFICES?

Yes: 

No: 

Find additional information about jurisdiction operational changes on our COVID-19 Jurisdiction Materials page: [aamva.org/COVID-19-Jurisdiction-Materials](https://aamva.org/COVID-19-Jurisdiction-Materials).



{THIS MONTH'S QUESTION}



**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE EPISODE OF AAMVACAST SO FAR, AND WHAT TOPICS OR PEOPLE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE FEATURED IN THE FUTURE?**

## PODCAST FAST FACTS



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June 2020

**NUMBER OF EPISODES**  
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**NUMBER OF DOWNLOADS**  
over 10,000

**COUNTRIES REACHED**  
63

### MOST DOWNLOADED EPISODES

- ❶ Episode 1:  
Welcome!
- ❷ Episode 8:  
Driver Testing During COVID featuring Kevin Shwedo
- ❸ Episode 10:  
mDL and Contactless Transactions
- ❹ Episode 7:  
Online Services and the Virtual Field Office featuring Steve Gordon
- ❺ Episode 38:  
Third-Party Agents

### FAVORITE EPISODE

Episode 24: Automated Vehicles with Bernard Soriano

### WHAT I'D LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT IN FUTURE EPISODES

ADAS vehicles, electric vehicles, [and it would be] nice to mix in some people of interest.

**Rhonda Lahm, Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles**

### FAVORITE EPISODES

Episode 9: Strategic Planning and Change Management with Georgia Steele (I am a little biased so let me list another one)  
Episode 44: The DMV of the Future. This covered the impacts of technology, generational shifts and COVID on DMVs. The report gave insight on how DMVs can be more strategic with future planning ... and I am fascinated by strategic planning (another reason for my first selection).

**Georgia Steele, Chief Performance Officer, Georgia Department of Revenue**



#### FAVORITE EPISODE

Episode 9: Strategic Planning & Change Management

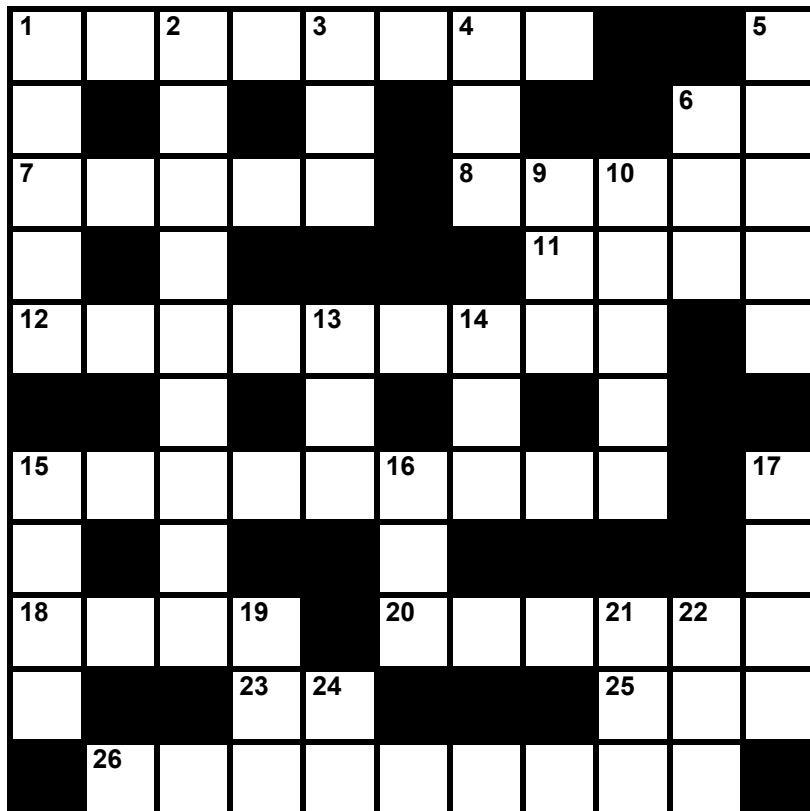
#### WHAT I'D LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT IN FUTURE EPISODES

Entry-level driver training, broken down into language CDL drivers can relate to.

**Darlene LaBonte, Connecticut DMV**

Visit [aamvacast.podbean.com](https://aamvacast.podbean.com) to find more than 50 podcast episodes featuring news, information and expertise for the AAMVA community.

## crossword



### ACROSS

- 1 Driving over the limit
- 6 What @ means
- 7 Increasing use of these while driving is one of the causes of higher road fatalities in 2020
- 8 West coast Florida city
- 11 Deep in thought
- 12 Vital car safety features (2 words)
- 15 Carbon discharges into the environment
- 18 Curve in the road
- 20 The D in DHR
- 23 Real \_\_\_\_\_
- 25 Imitate

- 26 Drug that affects perception and reaction time being increasingly used by drivers while driving

### DOWN

- 1 Opposing parties in a dispute
- 2 One of NHTSA's countermeasures to rising fatalities on the roads
- 3 Criticize
- 4 Fishing equipment
- 5 The S in S2S
- 6 Drivemode is one which silences phone calls and texts when driving over 15 mph

- 9 Skill
- 10 Pandemic protections
- 13 School transport
- 14 Zodiac sign
- 15 Falls back
- 16 Fort Wayne is in this state, abbr.
- 17 Its tread is a safety point
- 19 Board member: abbr.
- 21 Enclosed vehicle
- 22 Govt. org. concerned with environmental protection
- 24 Twice as a prefix



# IS HIGHWAY SAFETY SICK?



COVID-WEARY  
JURISDICTIONS  
GRAPPLE WITH  
A SECONDARY  
PANDEMIC:  
DANGEROUS DRIVING

BY MATT ALDERTON



safety





safety

Thanks to social distancing and stay-at-home orders in cities across the globe, motorists stayed at home, airplanes idled in hangars and busy factories went dark. Although the economy floundered, the environment flourished. A study in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, for example, found that global emissions of carbon dioxide decreased by nearly 20% in the early days of the pandemic. Simultaneously, levels of the pollutant nitrogen dioxide fell by 20% to 40% in the United States, Western Europe and China, according to the American Geophysical Union.

Traffic safety advocates had reason to be just as optimistic as environmentalists. If declines in automobile traffic could produce a decrease in air pollution, they reasoned, they surely would facilitate a decrease in fatal car crashes, too.

"In the past, when vehicle miles traveled declined, fatalities also declined," says Essie Wagner, office director for the Office of Behavioral Safety Research at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), who cites as a reference point the year 2008, which marked the start of the Great Recession. That year, NHTSA reports, vehicle miles traveled fell 2% compared to 2007, precipitating a 10% decline in fatalities from motor vehicle crashes, which reached their lowest level since 1961.

"Our analysis showed that having less discretionary income was a strong predictor for these changes," continues Wagner, who notes a historical correlation between traffic fatalities and unemployment: When there are fewer people working, there are fewer people driving—to jobs they don't have, for example, and to activities and vacations they can't afford. The result is fewer crashes and, therefore, fewer traffic deaths.

With the U.S. economy receding as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, logic suggested that what happened in 2008 would happen again in 2020. But data showed otherwise. Although vehicle miles traveled fell by an estimated 13%, motor-vehicle deaths actually rose by 8%, according to the National Safety Council (NSC), which estimates there were 42,060 motor-vehicle deaths in 2020 compared to 39,107 in 2019. The death rate, meanwhile, surged by an estimated 24%, from 1.2 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled in 2019 to 1.49 in 2020. That's the highest death-rate increase in 96 years, according to the NSC.

"It is tragic that in the U.S., we took cars off the roads and didn't reap any safety benefits," NSC President and CEO Lorraine M. Martin said in a statement. "These data expose our lack of an effective roadway safety culture. It is past time to address roadway safety holistically and effectively."

The death rate surged by an estimated 24% from 2019 to 2020. That's the highest death-rate increase in 96 YEARS, according to NSC.

Stakeholders at both the state and federal levels agree. With the coronavirus finally retreating, they're committed to understanding what happened on U.S. roadways during the pandemic—and to preventing it from ever happening again.

## CRASHING INTO COVID-19

NHTSA's data for the first three quarters of 2020 are consistent with the NSC's estimates. During the first nine months of the year, there were 28,190 traffic deaths in the U.S. and a fatality rate of 1.35 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, up 4.6% and 22.7%, respectively, compared to the first nine months of 2019. Of particular concern are data from the third quarter, which logged a 13.1% increase in traffic deaths—from 9,953 to 11,260—and a 26.5% increase in the fatality rate, from 1.17 to 1.48.

Unemployment during this period averaged 8.5% and peaked at 14.8%, which under normal circumstances should have foiled traffic deaths. Clearly, however, there were other, stronger forces at play.

While it's too early to say with certainty exactly what those forces were, a few obvious trends loom large.

The most significant is speeding, according to Barbara Rooney, director of the California Office of Traffic Safety. In the first month of California's stay-at-home order—from March 19 to April 19—she says California observed a 35% decline in traffic volume on state roads but recorded an 87% increase in the number of citations issued for speeding in excess of 100 miles per hour. Since peaking in May 2020, those citations have begun to subside, but only slightly. In September and October 2020, for example, the number of citations for excessive speeding in California was nearly double what it was in September and October 2019.

"The immediate shift in driver behavior has been alarming, to say the least," notes Rooney, who says traffic deaths in California rose 5% in 2020 compared to 2019.

The problem isn't confined to California. In Georgia, citations for speeding in excess of 100 miles per hour similarly rose by 56% in 2020, according to Spencer Moore,

*"It is tragic that in the U.S., we took cars off the roads and didn't reap any safety benefits."*

**LORRAINE M. MARTIN**  
NSC President and CEO

commissioner of the Georgia Department of Driver Services, who hypothesizes that increased speeding was born of increased opportunity.

“Especially during the height of the pandemic, traffic congestion was down. And the more open the highway is, the higher the speeds that drivers may drive,” says Moore, who also notes a decrease in traffic enforcement during the pandemic—initially as a means to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and later as a consequence of competing law enforcement priorities. “During much of the summer, law enforcement personnel across the country were heavily involved in social unrest issues. That contributed to a decrease in citations, which in our state were down 35% in 2020 compared to 2019.”

There might also have been an emotional component to increased speeding, suggests David Pabst, director of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s Bureau of Transportation Safety & Technical Services. “Some people may have been driving fast as a way of expressing their frustration during the pandemic,” ventures Pabst, who says traffic fatalities in Wisconsin grew 8.7% in 2020. “A lot of us during COVID were dealing with [mental health challenges]. We were locked down in our homes, but in our cars, we felt a sense of freedom.”

In many jurisdictions, motorists’ craving for freedom also translated into increased motorcycle deaths, according to Pabst, who says motorcycle fatalities in Wisconsin increased 38% in 2020. ▶

Listen to our podcast episode on distracted driving with Robert Ritter, director of the Office of Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

[bit.ly/AAMVACAST45](https://bit.ly/AAMVACAST45)



## COVID-19 AND COLLISIONS: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

For Canadians, the stress of COVID-19 brought out aggression on roadways, observes Yoassry Elzohairy, manager of research and evaluation at the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. Like his peers in the United States, Elzohairy expected the pandemic to have an ameliorating effect on traffic fatalities in Canada. Instead, it exacerbated them.

### UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Economic downturns in Canada historically have been associated with reduced traffic fatalities. “While this is partially due to reduced exposure from a reduction in travel, recent research confirms that several risky driving behaviors also tend to decrease per vehicle mile traveled [VMT],” Elzohairy says. “This includes per VMT decreases in fatalities due to collisions involving large trucks, speeding drivers and alcohol-impaired drivers. It would seem natural to assume this would have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well.”

In fact, it didn’t. “Preliminary Ontario collision data suggests that if there were any fewer roadway fatalities in 2020 compared to 2019, the difference was minimal,” he continues. “Moreover, we

saw a substantial rise in speed-related collisions and, in particular, collisions involving extreme speed. Preliminary data also suggests an elevated involvement of drugs and alcohol in collisions during 2020.”

Especially concerning was a rise in “stunt driving”—i.e., driving in excess of 50 kilometers per hour over the posted speed limit—recorded incidences of which increased 186% in Ontario between March 2020 and June 2020. Under Ontario law, motorists who engage in stunt driving face immediate administrative license suspension and vehicle impoundment prior to conviction, with significant fines, further license suspension, demerit points and possible jail time upon conviction.

### RESPONDING TO TROUBLING TRENDS

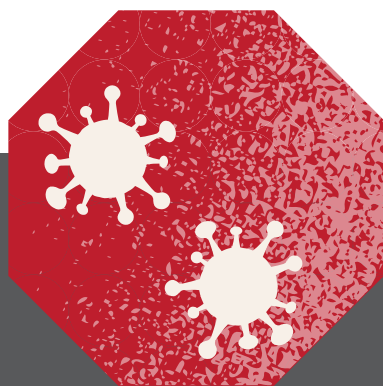
In response, Ontario recently passed the Moving Ontarians More Safely (MOMS) Act, which increases penalties for stunt driving, including a new requirement that convicted stunt drivers complete a driver training course prior to having their license reinstated.

The addition of driver education is critical, Elzohairy says. “Through jurisdictional

scanning, my research team has found that public education and road safety efforts throughout North America in the past decade or so have prioritized drug-impaired and distracted driving. While these newer areas of concern have rightly attracted our collective attention, it may be time to bring more traditional areas of road safety concern back into the spotlight,” he says.

While traditional areas of road safety remain important, COVID-19 has underscored the need for nontraditional approaches to address them.

Concludes Elzohairy, “Stronger penalties are important for deterrence and to communicate the message that risky driving behavior is not acceptable. Similarly, for those who remain undeterred, education programs are important for future behavior change. Yet we need to continue exploring novel, nuanced approaches to countermeasures. This will require a strong investment in research to better understand the psychology of various driver sub-populations, so those groups can be targeted with the most appropriate countermeasures based on the latest findings from behavioral sciences.”



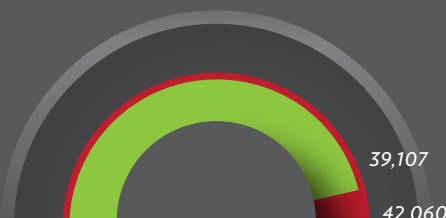
## DRIVING SAFETY GAUGES

Several safety indicators worsened during the pandemic, even as vehicle miles traveled fell by an estimated 13% in the U.S.



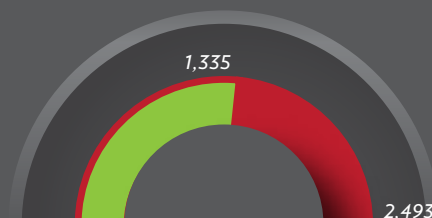
**FATALITY RATE OF MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES**

*Third quarter 2020 compared to second quarter 2020, nationally*



**MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS**

*2019 compared to 2020, nationally*



**CITATIONS FOR SPEEDING IN EXCESS OF 100 MPH**

*California first month of state lockdown compared to the previous year*

“Early on during COVID, people were feeling cooped up and needed to get out. For a lot of motorcycle riders, that meant riding their motorcycles,” continues Pabst, who guesses that there were more inexperienced riders on roads during the pandemic, including new riders who may have used stimulus money to buy their first motorcycle and former riders whose skills might have been rusty.

The pandemic’s emotional component is evident in another COVID-era trend: impaired driving.

“During the pandemic, drug and alcohol use increased,” reports Wagner, who cites a NHTSA study of five trauma centers, which found almost two-thirds of seriously or fatally injured drivers tested positive for at least one active drug, including alcohol, marijuana or opioids, between mid-March and mid-July 2020. Before the pandemic, 50.8% of drivers tested positive for at least one drug, compared to 64.7% in the first four months of the pandemic.

“When we saw that alcohol sales were increasing during the pandemic, folks in the traffic safety community held our breath,” Rooney says. “We were hoping that people would stay home and drink, but that doesn’t appear to be the case. Instead, it appears that increases in drinking have spilled out onto our roadways, and that’s really frightening.”

What’s especially frightening about impaired driving is that it’s likely to get worse instead of better, according to Moore. While there will be less opportunity to speed as traffic returns to pre-pandemic levels, there will be more opportunity to drink and drive as patrons return to restaurants and bars.

“There’s pent-up frustration among the public from not having the opportunity to go out and socialize. So my expectation is that you’ll see more impaired driving crashes as bars and restaurants open back up,” Moore says.

Another concern is seat belt use, as the number of unbelted drivers increased from 21.9% to 28.4%, and the number of unbelted passengers increased from 24.6% to 40.8%, during the first four months of the pandemic, NHTSA reports.

“If you crash, and you’re not wearing your seat belt, all the airbags in the world won’t protect you,” Pabst says.

### PUTTING THE BRAKES ON TRAFFIC DEATHS

The pandemic is temporary. Unfortunately, there are indicators that the dangerous driving trends it spawned might not be. “So far, the trends have been the same in 2021 as they were in 2020—if not worse,” Spencer says.

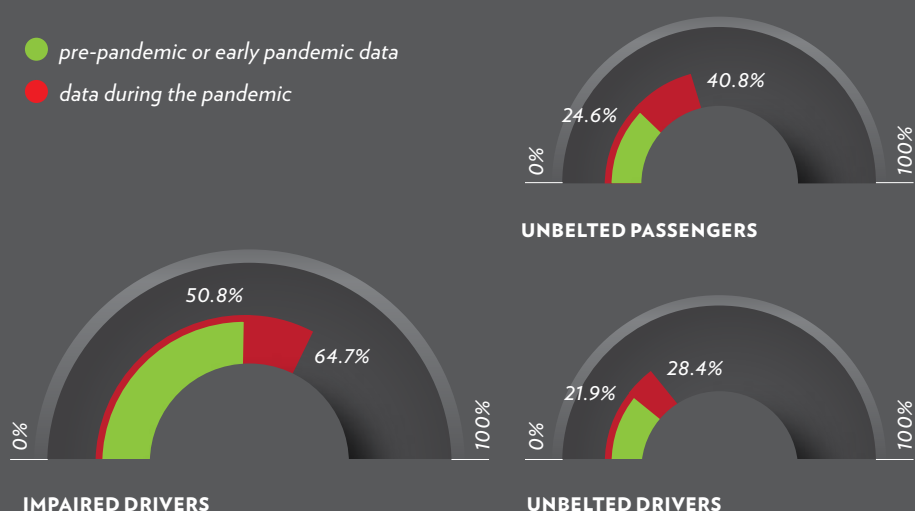
Echoes Pabst, “It’s way too early to say whether this is a permanent shift, but right now, we’re even with last year. In 2020, we hit 100 fatalities on April 15. In 2021, we hit the same mark on the exact same date. That’s not very encouraging.”

Although it’s not encouraging, it is galvanizing, according to Rooney. “There have been significant gains in traffic safety over the last 15 years, but the COVID-19 ‘crash’ that has hit this country has wiped out a lot of those gains,” she says. “It’s sad, and it’s disappointing, but it’s also a call to action. Traffic fatalities are violent deaths, and they can be avoided.”

First and foremost, reversing negative trends requires research, according to NHTSA. “The research we have been doing is very important because it can be used to save lives,” Wagner says. “Our research projects have given us a new reason to call on our traffic safety partners across the country to encourage them to analyze their own data, identify their own traffic safety problems and roll out traffic safety countermeasures to meet those needs.”



● pre-pandemic or early pandemic data  
● data during the pandemic



First four months of the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic, from a study of five trauma centers

During the first four months of the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic, nationally

*“The most critical recommendation I can make to help states reduce traffic injuries and deaths is to collaborate. We have to be on the same page and sending the same message.”*

**SPENCER MOORE**

Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Driver Services

Although the pandemic is an unprecedented circumstance, NHTSA’s traffic safety partners believe that tried-and-true countermeasures—the three E’s of traffic safety: education, enforcement and engineering—will save the day.

In California, for example, Rooney’s office in April 2020 issued a joint press release with its transportation safety partners to spread the word about excessive speeding. The following November, it launched its first-ever anti-speeding ad campaign encouraging drivers to “slow the fast down.” Simultaneously, state and local law enforcement conducted targeted speed enforcement efforts while the California State Transportation Agency published a new “Strategic

Highway Safety Plan” that incorporates the Safe System approach to roadway design, the goal of which is to design roadways in ways that force drivers to slow down.

“You can’t educate your way to zero deaths. You can’t enforce your way to zero deaths. And you can’t design your way to zero deaths. Really, it takes all three,” Rooney says.

Although traditional tools work, updates are needed. In Wisconsin, for example, the state is spending education resources on marketing via social networks and streaming media platforms. One effort, in particular, stands out: a new “Click It or Ticket” public service announcement featuring Green Bay Packers Hall of Famer Donald Driver, produced in the style of Japanese anime.

In the first four months of the pandemic, drivers testing positive for at least one drug rose 13.9%.

“We have to double down on what we know works, but we have to be smarter with our money by making sure we’re getting the right message to the right people in the right medium that speaks to them,” Pabst says. “In this case, we’re targeting the young males who we know are most likely to be speeding, driving impaired and not buckling up.”

Georgia’s Moore says it’s just as important to engage partners as it is to engage the public. “The most critical recommendation I can make to help states reduce traffic injuries and deaths is to collaborate,” says Moore, whose office tackles highway safety alongside the Georgia Governor’s Office of Highway Safety, the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Georgia Department of Public Health and the Georgia Department of Public Safety, which collectively author the Georgia Strategic Highway Safety Plan. “State partners, federal partners, local law enforcement partners and local EMS partners—all of us need to be able to come together to have a robust dialogue about the dynamics and trends that we’re seeing in our state. We have to be on the same page and sending the same message. That’s how we solve this problem.”

“If this pandemic teaches us anything, it’s that we should have a renewed sense of care for one another,” Rooney concludes. “Millions of families were focused on remaining safe by staying home and wearing masks during the pandemic. Now, this attention to safety needs to translate to the driver’s seat and our nation’s roads, as well. We need to find a way to harness this newfound care for our safety and the safety of others and translate it to road safety. Doing that will help us realize reductions in crashes, fatalities and serious injuries.” **m**

## go online

AAMVA IS PARTNERED WITH THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL ON THE ROAD TO ZERO COALITION, WHICH HAS OUTLINED SEVERAL INITIATIVES TO END ROADWAY DEATHS IN THE U.S. BY 2050. LEARN MORE AT [NSC.ORG/ROAD-SAFETY/GET-INVOLVED/ROAD-TO-ZERO](https://nsc.org/road-safety/get-involved/road-to-zero).

# ***TAKING THE AIR OUT OF TIRES TO IMPROVE AUTOMOTIVE SAFETY***

*Non-pneumatic technology has tremendous potential to enhance motor vehicle safety by reducing risks associated with improper tire pressure, which may cause tire failures, skidding or loss of control, and increased stopping distance.*

- 
- ▶ *Michelin Uptis is an airless mobility solution for passenger vehicles, which reduces the risk of flat tires and tire failures that result from punctures or road hazards.*
  - ▶ *The breakthrough airless technology of the Michelin Uptis also eliminates the need for regular air-pressure checks and reduces the need for other preventive maintenance.*
  - ▶ *Michelin Uptis is well-suited to new forms of mobility, especially autonomous and electric vehicles.*
  - ▶ *Since Uptis was first announced in June 2019, Michelin has received multiple prominent recognitions for its advancement in airless tire technology, including the 2020 Tire Technology of the Year award at the global Tire Technology Expo<sup>1</sup>, a Golden Steering Wheel Award in Germany<sup>2</sup>, a COYOTE Automobile Award in France and Autonomous Vehicle Technology – Autonomy Connectivity Electrification Mobility Services Award in the United States<sup>3</sup>.*





## ***A NEW STEP TOWARD SAFETY AND SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IS MOVING INTO THE MAINSTREAM.***

Today, tires are condemned as scrap due to flats, failures or irregular wear caused by improper air pressure or poor maintenance. These issues can cause crashes, create congestion on the roads and result in large amounts of tire waste. The majority of these tire-related problems could be eliminated with the transition to non-pneumatic solutions.

Airless wheel assemblies could become the next transformational advancement in vehicle safety and technology. Airless solutions eliminate the risks of flats and rapid air loss due to punctures or road hazards. By removing the air from the tire, airless solutions also reduce irregular wear or other performance degradation due to under-inflation or over-inflation.

Michelin has developed the state-of-the-art, non-pneumatic tire solution: the Unique Puncture-Proof Tire System ("Uptis"). Uptis is an airless wheel assembly that delivers performance on par with conventional "zero-pressure" pneumatic tires, and also provides safety, maintenance and environmental benefits. In an ongoing co-development program, Michelin and General Motors aim to deliver this new technology as an available option to consumers as early as 2024.

The Uptis airless design eliminates the need for regular air-pressure checks and reduces other regular tire maintenance as well, which also makes it ideal for the vehicles of tomorrow – ranging from self-driving vehicles to all-electric and shared-service cars, whose occupants may not be expected to replace a flat tire.

Michelin has been working with non-pneumatic solutions for nearly 20 years. The Company introduced the first commercial airless offering for light construction equipment, the MICHELIN® TWEEL® airless radial solution. Michelin has continued its innovations to expand its portfolio of airless technologies for non-automotive applications, while also advancing this technology for passenger vehicles. Uptis balances highway speed capability, rolling resistance, mass, comfort and noise.

Continuing Uptis' progression to market, in April 2020, the U.S. Tire and Rim Association approved the engineering and design guide for non-pneumatic tire and wheel assemblies, which advances the broad deployment of non-pneumatic tires.

Michelin is a company that thinks long-term about consumer safety, consumer value and sustainable mobility. The introduction of airless mobility solutions for passenger cars represents the next critical advancement in automotive safety and performance.

**VISIT [MICHELINMEDIA.COM/MICHELIN-UPDIS](https://www.michelinmedia.com/michelin-uptis)**

for more information about Michelin's non-pneumatic solution, Uptis.

(1) <https://www.tiretechnology-expo.com/en/awards-2020.php>

(2) <https://www.rubbernews.com/tire/michelin-uptis-wins-golden-steering-award-innovation>

(3) <https://www.tyrepress.com/2019/12/innovation-awards-for-michelin-airless-prototype-tyre/>

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## *UPDATE TO S2S VERIFICATION SERVICE ALLOWS DMVS TO SHARE AND ACCESS CURRENT DRIVER HISTORY RECORDS*

BY ANDREW CONNER





# KEEPING RACK



Since the first state joined the State-to-State (S2S) Verification Service in August 2015, almost two-thirds of states in the U.S. have implemented the system and taken advantage of its benefits.

“It’s a robust system that not only allows us to fulfill our federal responsibilities with REAL ID and commercial driver’s licenses, but also some of our shared responsibilities, such as the general integrity of our products, reducing fraud and allowing for real-time notifications,” says Kristina Boardman, administrator at the Wisconsin Division of Motor Vehicles, which was the first state to join S2S.

Similar to the Commercial Driver’s License Information System (CDLIS), S2S is a system that allows jurisdictions to check if a driver’s license applicant already holds a driver’s license or ID in another state. Recently, the S2S Service has been enhanced by updating it to include driver history records (DHR).

### UPGRADING S2S

“Frankly, this update is something that has been in the works for many years. We were involved in the development of S2S, and we had a conversation about [DHR functionality] when we made the decision to get S2S off the ground,” says Chrissy Nizer, administrator at the Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration and incoming AAMVA Board Chair. “It’s something states have wanted for years.”

Nizer explains that before the DHR update to S2S, the process for sharing driver history records was (and still is) often slow and tedious. “We know manual exchange of records is not as efficient or effective—there are delays in processing time, loss of paperwork, and, unfortunately, all of those things have very serious consequences in our world because they are directly related to highway safety,” Nizer says.

A high-profile crash in New Hampshire in June 2019 that

*“We know some people have a bad record in one state and then go to a new state and start fresh. This system is going to prevent that.”*

**LOFFIE JORDAAN**

Business Solutions Architect at AAMVA



## HIGHLIGHTING A NEED

The importance of the driver history records (DHR) update to the State-to-State (S2S) Verification Service was highlighted in New Hampshire in June 2019, when a pickup truck towing a trailer collided with a group of motorcyclists, resulting in seven fatalities. After an investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), it was determined that the driver should not have received a license because the driver's previous license was suspended in May 2019. Because the pickup was a commercial vehicle, the electronic notification of this suspension was sent through CDLIS from Connecticut, where the driver's license was suspended, to Massachusetts, where the driver currently held a commercial driver's license. However, the conviction

was not processed fast enough, allowing the driver to continue to be on the road and ultimately cause this crash.

As a result of the investigation, the NTSB made a recommendation for states to "[d]irect your state licensing agencies to review existing procedures or develop new ones to accurately and expeditiously (1) process notifications received from other states about infractions and suspensions committed by the home state's drivers in those jurisdictions, and (2) notify other jurisdictions of infractions and suspensions committed in the home state by drivers licensed in those jurisdictions." The DHR update to S2S allows for this functionality and as states begin to come on board, it will improve highway safety by reducing the number of drivers on the road who shouldn't be behind the wheel.



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Read the full NTSB  
report at  
[bit.ly/  
BMGAbstract](https://bit.ly/BMGAbstract).

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killed seven people brought the highway safety impact of this function to light when one of the key safety issues identified by a National Transportation Safety Board investigation of the crash was “deficiencies in out-of-state driver’s license notification processing.” This crash highlighted the importance of a more efficient and robust driver history sharing system.

“The biggest single benefit of the DHR update is better road safety,” says Loffie Jordaan, business solutions architect at AAMVA. “The main reason is because your driver record will follow you. It’s much more difficult when you have a driver record in each state because we know some people have a bad record in one state and then go to a new state and start fresh. This system is going to prevent that.”

Almost  
**TWO-THIRDS** of  
states in the  
U.S. have  
implemented  
State-to-  
State  
Verification  
Service.

“It is the same concept that we have for commercial drivers [through CDLIS] applied to noncommercial drivers,” Jordaan says. “The previous S2S system did not allow for the electronic exchange of convictions and withdrawals, so that was added with this update. Additionally, the system previously didn’t raise a flag and require a resolution when the system thought one person had two driver records. That’s built into CDLIS but wasn’t in S2S. We also added that as part of DHR.”

Bringing the CDLIS-style system of electronic notification to S2S will make it easier for jurisdictions to send convictions and withdrawals to one another, and, more importantly, it will decrease the time necessary to process those convictions. In this aspect of the system, Jordaan echoes Nizer’s comments, explaining that the DHR update is a far superior way to administer convictions compared to the previous system. “We know the manual processing behind paper convictions can be slow, and sometimes they don’t reach the intended recipient state,” Jordaan says. “So besides being cumbersome, they are also unreliable. The DHR update addresses that and will make it much easier to get convictions onto a driver record quicker, which, in the end, leads to better road safety.”

*“The more we can do to ensure we are issuing licenses with the highest level of integrity, the better position we are all in.”*

#### CHRIS NIZER

Administrator at the Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration and incoming AAMVA Board Chair



#### ALL ABOARD

Currently, two states are in the process of implementing the DHR update to S2S, and a third is planning to begin the process later this year. Since DHR is an update rather than a separate system, every state on S2S will eventually have the functionality, allowing all states to eventually come onto the service.

With the DHR update now live, for states that aren’t currently on S2S, there has never been a better time to join the system. “For anyone looking to come on, I would recommend doing your original programming and the DHR update at the same time,” says Melissa Lechner, director of driver compliance at the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles.



*“We also found we were able to identify statistics we have never seen before—such as how often someone is switching states or moving and coming back—and we didn’t realize S2S would have those added benefits [when we joined].”*

**MELISSA LECHNER**

Director of Driver Compliance at the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles

“Then, you don’t have to go back and do the update later. Just as we see benefits every time a new state joins S2S, I think we’ll continue to see those added benefits as states make the DHR update.”

Lechner points to data analysis as one of the added benefits of S2S that they didn’t expect when first joining the system in 2016. “Initially, we considered the fact that we would be able to clean up old files and identify fraud,” Lechner says, “but we also found we were able to identify statistics we have never seen before—such as how often someone is switching states or moving and coming back—and we didn’t realize S2S would have those added benefits [when we joined].”

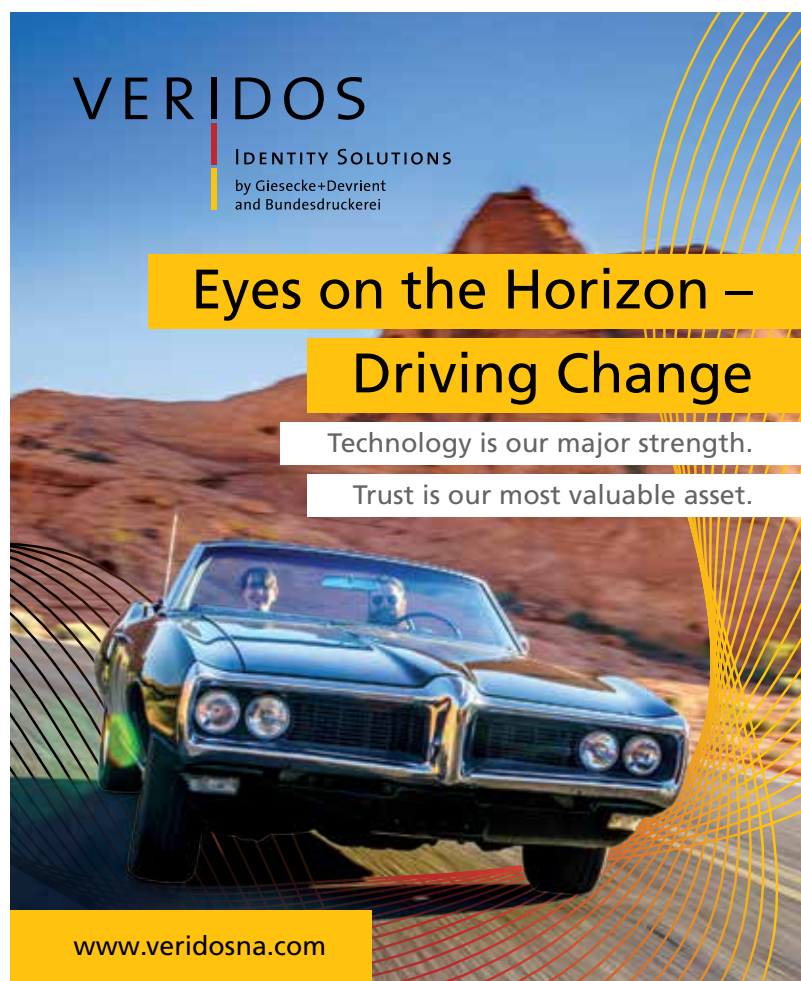
S2S is a system that works best with full participation: “Fraudsters look for the weakest link,” Nizer says. “So the more we can do to ensure we are issuing licenses with the highest level of integrity, the better position we are all in. I would encourage all jurisdictions to implement S2S not just for the clear benefit they will see internally, but also the global benefit it has for fraud protection.”

For jurisdictions that are looking to get on board and aren’t sure where to start, AAMVA’s S2S Working Group ([aamva.org/state-to-state](http://aamva.org/state-to-state)) is a great place to start. Lechner also recommends not being shy about reaching out to other jurisdictions that are on the system. **m**

***find out more***

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE-TO-STATE VERIFICATION SERVICE DRIVER HISTORY RECORD UPDATE, CONTACT AAMVA OR VISIT [AAMVA.ORG/STATE-TO-STATE](http://AAMVA.ORG/STATE-TO-STATE).

LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST ON THIS TOPIC AT [BIT.LY/AAMVACAST57](http://BIT.LY/AAMVACAST57).



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## MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND CANADA HAVE FOUND NEW AND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO DO THINGS.

**Q & A** WITH

# Chrissy Nizer



*INCOMING AAMVA BOARD CHAIR AND ADMINISTRATOR AT THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATION SHARES HER VISION FOR THE ORGANIZATION*

**Q HOW HAVE YOU WORKED WITH AAMVA OVER THE YEARS?**

I've been involved in AAMVA practically the entire time I've been with the Motor Vehicle Administration in Maryland—over 15 years—and have found it to be a tremendous resource. It's a great community of people who are all dedicated to the same things: providing the best customer service possible and making sure that we have safe drivers and safe vehicles on the road. It's an honor, frankly, to help lead this organization alongside a great board of directors and wonderful staff.

**Q DO YOU HAVE ANY PROGRAMS THAT YOU ARE GOING TO BE PUTTING FORWARD OR CONTINUING FROM THE PREVIOUS BOARD?**

I think that it is a time of reinventing and renewing ourselves as motor vehicle agencies as we recover from the pandemic. Just as the rest of the country is recovering, motor vehicle administrations throughout the country and Canada have found new and innovative ways to do things. Much more is being done electronically, which is great, but how do we continue to provide the best service we can, both in person and remotely? How do we continue to ensure safety on the roadways? We are looking for opportunities to develop best practices in this new environment.

**Q IS THERE SOMETHING THAT YOU HAVE SEEN IN MARYLAND THAT YOU'D LIKE TO PROMOTE WITH OTHER JURISDICTIONS?**

Motor vehicle agencies throughout the country and in Canada have used appointments as a way to more efficiently manage customers and improve the customer experience, and we've done that in Maryland. Some jurisdictions have said they're going to continue that, so it'll be interesting to see how that evolves going forward. Over the years, I've noticed in some of our jurisdictions, the connections between the highway safety offices and the motor vehicle agencies are not always as strong as they could be, so I'm definitely going to see if there's something I can do to help strengthen those relationships going forward.

## FAST FACTS

### Chrissy Nizer



#### EDUCATION

Goucher College for my bachelor's degree in political science,  
Rutgers University for my master's degree in public policy



WHAT DO YOU DRIVE?  
Audi Q3



WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?  
A variety of different podcasts



#### HOBBIES

Spending time with my niece, nephew and my rescue dog, Bailey

### Q WHAT TRANSPORTATION ISSUES ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT?

Safety and customer service are my two real passions. In my role as the [Maryland] governor's highway safety representative, I have interacted with many individuals whose lives are changed forever because they lost a loved one as a result of a motor vehicle crash. It's something that stays with you. Those interactions motivate me every day to help reach that goal of zero fatalities because that loved one who is lost, that hole in that family, is something that lasts forever. One small thing we can all do is stop calling them motor vehicle accidents and start calling them motor vehicle crashes to make clear these tragedies are preventable.

I'm also passionate about customer service. That's what we're here to do: serve the customer. We all take the responsibility of serving every resident in our jurisdictions very seriously, but I think expectations have changed. People are doing more things remotely, so they expect that online experience, whether it's with the state or a private entity, to be similar. At the same time, we must make sure that we're meeting the needs of other folks who don't have internet access, or who aren't as comfortable using it, to the same extent. **m**

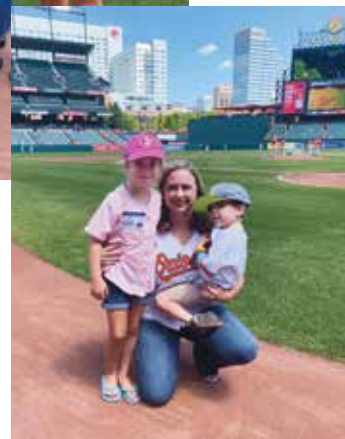
*"We are looking for opportunities to develop best practices in this new environment."*

#### CHRISSY NIZER

Administrator at the Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration and incoming AAMVA Board Chair



Top: Chrissy Nizer (far left) at a Baltimore Orioles game with her family.



Right: Nizer holds her niece and nephew at the baseball field.

Bottom: Nizer traveling in Australia





# A Pandemic Puzzler

*DESPITE PEOPLE TRAVELING LESS, TRAFFIC INCIDENTS AND FATALITIES INCREASED IN 2020. EXPERTS ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND AND COPE WITH THIS SURPRISING AND DANGEROUS TREND*

## A NEW APPROACH

**JAKE NELSON, DIRECTOR OF TRAFFIC SAFETY, ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH, AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION (AAA)**

The pandemic caused automobile travel to come to a screeching halt last year. We saw vehicle miles traveled (VMT)—at least in the first nine months of 2020—drop significantly. At the same time, there was an increase not only in the raw number of people killed in traffic crashes compared to 2019, but the motor vehicle fatality rate per VMT increased, as well.

While nobody can confirm the real reason why this occurred, there are a variety of hypotheses about what those contributing factors might be, such as speed. However, we aren't sure why people are going faster. It's possible the COVID-19 lockdown periods caused stress not only about public health, but economic stress as well. Self-reported usage rates of alcohol and other substances increased in the same period.

At AAA, we've looked at this issue more holistically. For us as an organization, we are not thinking of it as traffic safety during COVID-19 so much as how we can do better generally.

As an example, safety belt usage rates in the country hover around 90%. This is good, but that last 10% who aren't belted are a persistent bunch. While the "Click It or Ticket" campaign has been a success, the message hasn't changed in many years, and we can't expect that it will suddenly compel that last 10% to buckle up. I think there could be more of an intentional investment in understanding who makes up that last unbuckled 10% of people. What are their demographics? What are their reasons for not wearing safety belts? We can use that information to develop campaigns that resonate better with this group of people. This line of thinking can be applied to solve for speeding and distracted driving as well.

Infrastructure countermeasures represent another area we can prioritize to prevent injury and save lives. AAA recommends that when upgrading a road or intersection, jurisdictions think about using that opportunity to include other roadway countermeasures designed to prevent crashes or reduce the severity of those that do occur. We have to be creative and smart about how we use the limited resources we have in highway safety to make the greatest impact on safety and mobility.



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# SPEED HAS A COMPOUNDING EFFECT

MATT LANGER, COLONEL OF THE MINNESOTA STATE PATROL AND GENERAL CHAIR OF THE STATE AND PROVINCIAL DIVISION OF THE IACP

When the pandemic first started last year and stay-at-home orders were issued, we saw a dramatic reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which brought about a dramatic reduction in congestion. We hoped the traffic safety impact would be positive, but we've discovered it's been negative. Traffic fatalities have increased. Reduced congestion and vehicle miles traveled have opened opportunities for some risk-taking behaviors.

Why this is happening is difficult to say, but some theories are you just have more opportunity to speed and a misperception that there is a reduction in law enforcement out there to stop you if you are speeding. I think another component to explore is that individuals that heed public health advice and stay home to avoid getting sick are probably safe drivers, and perhaps the risk-taking population, historically younger males, did not change their behaviors and were out just as much as they were before COVID-19.

Law enforcement has encountered **TWICE** the number of people speeding in excess of **100 MPH** as before the pandemic.

In January, we launched a speed campaign in Minnesota to try to make a difference. It's been the No. 1 thing that citizens are bringing to our attention. They are fed up with the unnecessary and ridiculous speeds. We've encountered twice the number of people speeding in excess of 100 mph, so we are doing everything we can to focus on speed enforcement and try to get that back under control.

Everyone is at risk with speeding motorists—walkers, bikers, drivers. Of all the things that kill people behind the wheel—not wearing a seat belt, distractions, impaired driving—speed is the one thing that makes everything else worse. It increases the magnitude and the likelihood of injury, so there is an exponential effect to what happens when drivers are speeding.

Hopefully, as we move into the summer months, those fatal crash rates go back to pre-pandemic levels or lower, but summer tends to be the most dangerous time on the road for those of us that live in states like Illinois and Minnesota. So it will be interesting to see what happens once those VMT rates go back up to what they used to be.

## MULTIFACETED SOLUTION

JONATHAN ADKINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASSOCIATION

At the beginning of the pandemic as roads cleared, drivers took this as permission to drive dangerously without any consequences. Busy interstates and corridors all of a sudden weren't so busy. Before, drivers couldn't go much past 50 or 60 mph because of traffic volume. Suddenly, they could go 80 mph, and they did.

As a national organization, we are doing a couple of different things to address speeding. We are partnering with two other organizations, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the National Road Safety Foundation, to fund two speed management pilots in Virginia and Maryland. These address speeding broadly not only with enforcement, but also with engineering and emergency management systems. We think they may become a model for other communities.

This is a national problem. We are seeing significant fatalities particularly for pedestrians. We reported in May that the pedestrian death rate per mile rose 21% from 2019 to 2020.

*The pedestrian death rate per mile rose 21% from 2019 to 2020.*

If we can get a handle on speeding nationally, that's the single most effective thing we can do to turn this trend around.

We are not going to build or enforce our way out of the problem. We have to do a variety of different things. Our infrastructure isn't set up to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in many cases; as a result, we've seen spikes in pedestrian deaths. There is also a lot that can be done with infrastructure and road design in urban areas to reduce speeding, such as roundabouts. We are excited about the focus on infrastructure, but it's not the only piece of the safety equation, and it's going to take a long time. So we can't stop enforcing traffic safety laws with traditional law enforcement.

We do have an issue with enforcement. It's more difficult

now for traffic enforcement to pull people over because of concerns about officer safety and legitimate concerns about equity. We are having a national conversation about policing, and that's a really good conversation to have. Numerous improvements need to be made, but it may have a bit of a chilling effect, at least in the short term, on the number of stops that are made.

We didn't get into this situation overnight, and we're not going to get out of it overnight. Traffic deaths have been steady for the last decade or so. There has been a spike during COVID, which highlighted the issues and made it much worse for pedestrians. But even before COVID, we were still seeing close to 40,000 people dying every year in traffic crashes, so this has been a long time coming. **m**





# Eyes on the Horizon

MESSAGES FROM THE OUTGOING AND INCOMING AAMVA BOARD CHAIRS

This is my final column in *MOVE* as Chair of the AAMVA Board. Much has occurred since last summer, when we were all in the midst of dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our lives and our programs. I hope you have found, as I have, that working together to share ideas and experiences has helped us all improve our operations during this time.

It has empowered us to ensure the safety of our customers and employees. We've collectively covered a lot of ground since last year and, fortunately, are now transitioning out of this crisis.

It has been impressive to observe—and in some cases, participate—with our board members, AAMVA staff and volunteers this past year to accomplish all the work essential to keeping our association strong and supporting our members through this difficult time in history. We may not have been able to meet in person in 2020, but it did not reduce our productivity.

Speaking of meeting in person, as you know by now, we will be meeting in person for the 2021 AAMVA International Conference! This will be a great event and will begin our transition out of the COVID-19 working environment into a post-pandemic world. I hope you are able to join us in Denver from Aug. 31 to Sept. 2.

This edition of *MOVE* addresses one of the disappointing outcomes of the impact of COVID-19 on public safety and our roadways. Data from the Governors Highway Safety Association indicates that, despite a 13% decrease in traffic last year, there was a 7.2% increase in deaths on our roadways. Reducing this trend will be an important topic for our members in the months ahead.

I want to offer my congratulations and best wishes to our incoming chair, Chrissy Nizer. We could not be in better hands.

Thank you to all those who provided support and made contributions this past year!

Mike Dixon

2020–2021 AAMVA Chair of the Board

As I reflect on the past year and a half, two words come to mind: resilience and reimagination. I have been so proud to be a member of this community, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Motor vehicle agencies, law enforcement and associate members found new and innovative ways to serve the residents in our jurisdictions, resulting in valuable insight to help us better serve our customers going forward. Our colleagues displayed a remarkable ability to meet each new challenge, serving on the front lines to ensure that critical goods were delivered and commerce continued.

More than ever, we relied on AAMVA staff and our jurisdiction and industry colleagues for recommendations, innovative practices and discussion of important issues. Most importantly, we relied on each other. I would like to personally thank Anne and Mike for their leadership.

As we embark on a brighter tomorrow and “new normal,” I am grateful and humbled to serve as AAMVA Chair. Since joining the Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration over 15 years ago, AAMVA has been an endless resource, with countless colleagues who have provided guidance, insight and friendship. AAMVA is a valuable tool for all of its members, and I encourage you to get actively involved.

I look forward to continuing our work on customer service and highway safety and expanding that focus to new, exciting developments like the ability to exchange driver history records electronically through the State-to-State (S2S) Verification Service. Despite less traffic during the pandemic, too many of us saw this disturbing trend of increasing fatalities on our roadways. A solution will require all of us to work together.

I am confident that we can address these issues and many others that we will face in the next year. Please share with me your ideas and suggestions. I cannot wait to see you (in person!) and to catch up. **m**



Chrissy Nizer

2021–2022 AAMVA Chair of the Board





# Cryptographic Proof Beats Visual Presentation

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