

Columbia County drivers feel the need for speed and then do it

Despite the risk of costly fines, driver's license suspensions, jail time, death and serious injury, it appears that Columbia County drivers feel the need to speed — and one way or another, many have paid the price. According to the latest statistics from the Oregon Department of Transportation's Transportation Safety Division (TSD), excessive speed played a role in 50 percent of Columbia County's 2008 traffic fatalities. In fact, speed is the number one cause of traffic fatalities and injuries in Oregon, and a contributing factor in half of the state's fatal crashes each year.

"When looking at the factors contributing to auto crashes in

Oregon, the number of fatalities, and the quantity and severity of injuries, the statistics paint a vivid and frightening picture," said Steve Vitolo, TSD statewide traffic law enforcement program manager. "Speed kills — and it isn't just the speeding drivers who lose their lives; it's innocent drivers and passengers; it's construction workers and law enforcement officers; it's family members and friends."

Right now in Oregon, people who choose to speed kill more innocent Oregonians than drunk drivers. In 2008 alone, there were 210 speed-related fatalities in Oregon. And 40 percent of those killed in speed-related crashes in Oregon were

innocent victims.

In order to curb speeding in Oregon, law enforcement officers are using new technologies to pinpoint speeders. Laser devices track speed and determine the distance between vehicles, allowing officers to hand out steep fines and license suspensions to deter drivers from this deadly behavior. Today in Oregon, exceeding the speed limit by 30 mph can lead to a 30-day driver's license suspension and a \$679 fine. Speeds of 100 mph or more could earn drivers a \$1,103 fine plus a 30- to 90-day driver's license suspension.

Studies show that the majority of motorists ignore speed limits because they believe

they can maintain control of their vehicle, regardless of conditions. In reality, speeding reduces a driver's ability to steer safely around curves or objects in the roadway, extends the distance necessary to stop a vehicle and increases the distance a vehicle travels while the driver reacts to a dangerous situation — increasing both the likelihood and severity of crashes. Plus speeding-related crashes that result in fatalities are four times more likely to occur on a rural road than on an urban highway or freeway.

"People think that most fatal crashes happen on freeways and that they can get away with speeding on less crowded rural roads, but that's just not true," adds Vitolo. "Rural roads and local neighborhood streets provide less room to maneuver and more instances when drivers must react to unexpected circumstances."

TSD is working to educate the public about the dangerous

and deadly consequences of speeding. This summer, as Oregonians take to local roads for close-to-home vacations, TSD urges drivers to:

- Slow down and obey posted speed limits.

- Consider the compounded severity of crashes that occur when traveling even a few miles per hour over the limit.

- Take into account that time saved by speeding is negligible at best, and deadly at worst. Speeding is not worth the increased risk of a severe crash.

- Remember the greater danger of speeding on rural and neighborhood roads.

For more information about excessive speeding in Columbia County and TSD's campaign urging drivers to "slow down," contact Steve Vitolo, TSD statewide traffic law enforcement program manager at 503-932-0493. For more information about TSD, visit http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/Traffic_Enforcement.shtml.

Wage & hour handbook now ready

The long awaited 2009 Wage and Hour Handbook is now available from the Bureau of Labor and Industries' (BOLI) Technical Assistance for Employers Program. The newly revised and updated handbook provides a comprehensive guide to Oregon wage and hour laws for employers, and is an excellent employment law resource produced by the agency responsible for the enforcement of these laws.

The updated handbook, available for \$40 plus shipping, gives employers comprehensive information on wage and hour laws, including minimum wage, overtime, deductions, rest and meal periods, and child labor. Moreover, since employment laws change frequently, this handbook is an excellent guide on new laws passed by Oregon's legislature.

"At BOLI, we are committed to helping our state's businesses and employers succeed and thrive," said State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. "This handbook will help employers and businesses better understand Oregon employment laws, navigate difficult issues,

and stay in compliance."

The Technical Assistance Program is BOLI's employer-focused education and information service for individuals and businesses with questions about employment law and compliance. The Program offers seminars and handbooks for a fee, as well as a free phone and email hotline for employer questions.

The services provided by the Technical Assistance Program are funded with few taxpayer dollars and depend heavily on the sales of publications like this, and attendance fees from the seminars they conduct on various employment law topics. Through your support, our TA program can continue to answer more than 25,000 employer questions via phone and e-mail, conduct more than 220 public seminars, and produce educational materials like this each year.

"As an employment law attorney, I rely on being able to refer to my clients to BOLI for employment law information," said Richard Meneghello, a labor and employment attorney with Fisher & Phillips. "I regu-

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Fuel the fun, not the flames.

There's nothing better than spending these warm, clear days of summer in your yard. Here in Oregon, we can enjoy eating, playing and relaxing outside well into the fall. All this nice dry weather creates perfect conditions for wildfires too, especially when there are high winds and lightning storms.

Protect yourself and your property from the threat of wildfires by creating a defensible space around your home. Imagine a 30 to 200-foot buffer around your house that you keep clear of any dead plant material. Try to plant only fire-resistant, low-growing plants and shrubs in this zone.

Here are a few tips for maintaining your defensible space:

- Prune dead plants and clean out your gutters throughout the summer and fall.
- Keep the low-growing plants and shrubs around your house well watered until the rainy season begins.

- Consider pruning back any tree branches that are close to the house or ground.

- Stack the wood pile well away from the house.

For more ideas or to request the publication *Living with Fire*, contact your local Oregon Department of Forestry or Rural Fire District office.

Columbia 9-1-1 wants to make sure everyone can enjoy the nice weather and stay safe during wildfire season. Please help protect yourself and your community by maintaining your yard. If you do see a fire start, don't wait. Call 9-1-1 right away. When it comes to fires, every second counts.



Your Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District, serving all of our communities since 1991.