

# Behind The Wheel

Newsletter of the Maine Professional Drivers Association



Volume XIII, No. 4

“Committed to Safety, Courtesy, and Professionalism”

July/August 2003

## **NEXT MPDA GENERAL MEETING**

**September 27 - Hannaford Trucking - South Portland, Maine - 9:00am**  
FMI contact Dick Brown at <rbrown9@maine.rr.com> or 207-318-7395

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

My wife, Linda and I hope all of you had a great summer, I know that we sure did. Although the MPDA activities were slow. The work and family fun things sure did pick up. That was a good thing. As you all know the MPDA is real strong on family. I myself believe that a good family makes for a good driver.

I need to jump into the up coming season and that is going to bring us into MPDA election of officers this fall. All officers positions are up for election. Anyone that wishes to become an officer should let our secretary, Terry Stuart, know ASAP. She will get your name on the ballot.

I'm sorry to say that I will not be running for re-election. As most of you know I will be retiring in October. Linda and I have plans to travel, although I will still be a very active member.

*Dick Brown President MPDA*

### **ROADTEAM NEWS**

Well I missed the deadline for the last newsletter and almost did the same thing again. I really need to get with the program. Anyway I made it this time. Now that I am back to driving again I haven't been able to do many Driver-ed classes this summer.

Mike Shepherd's classes are in the morning so that puts me out at least for the summer. I did get a big class though back in June while I was on vacation.

**Mike and Cherie Conroy** are going great guns up in the Bangor area and will probably talk to 500 to 750 teenagers this year. Not bad for part time in between running to Chicago every week for **Pottle's Trans**. Thanks to Barry and the dispatch personnel for making this happen.

**Dave Stuart** has been working on some public service announcements to be aired on some of the radio stations.

Then of course there is **Ron Hutchins** who is out there in the MMTA mobile training unit and I wouldn't even dare to guess how many teenagers he is going to speak to this year, along with all the other various training he does. I will get that information though to have at our annual banquet.

**Mike Frith** will be working with me again starting in September.

**Roger Sproul** has been working diligently to get us hooked up with a very well known organization that is starting a driving school. If we get connected, this will be good for the MPDA. I'll keep you posted on that.

Keep watching your mail for a registration form for a defensive driving seminar coming up in October. **Ron Hutchins** will be teaching this and it will be good for a 3-point credit on your drivers' license. This will be free to MPDA members except for the five-dollar state-filing fee. The class is limited to 30 people so when you get the registration form return it quickly so you don't miss out.

Well that's it for this issue so drive safe out there and I'll see you on the boulevard in the Macomber one stack Mack with the tinted sliding window in the back.

We have enclosed a registration form for our upcoming MPDA membership training. The information about this seminar is on the form. The seminar will be on October 18, at the MMTA office in Augusta Maine. Sign in will be at 7:30AM. The seminar will be from 8:00AM. If you are interested in attending, I urge you to complete the form and send it back very soon. Reservations will be on a first come, first serve basis. This seminar is open to all drivers as long as they are an MPDA member. If you would like to attend, and aren't an MPDA member, our application is on our website, or you can call 727-3704 and ask for one.

*Fred Thompson, ROADTEAM Captain.*

### **UPCOMING COMPETITIONS**

- ◇ September 20 - **Emery-Waterhouse** Driving Competition - Portland
- ◇ September 21 - **H.P. Hood** Driving Competition - Portland
- ◇ October 1-4 - U.S. Professional Truck Driver Championships - Milwaukee
- ◇ October 4 - **Sysco** Driving Competition - Westbrook, Maine

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## NATIONAL TRUCK DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS

The ATA National Truck Driving Championships were held August 19<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup> in Columbus, Ohio.

At press time, we didn't have any results from this competition, but as soon as we have them, we will make sure to get them in the next issue of the Behind the Wheel.

### H.P. HOODS COMPETITION

August 24 was the day **H. P. Hoods** had their Vermont TDC in Rockingham, Vt. It was one of the best days we have seen this past summer - the weather was excellent. Just right for setting up a course, judging, and socializing with others in our industry that showed just how professional they are.



Our thanks to Bill Raimondi from Hoods and **Andy Reed** for the excellent hospitality. THANK YOU Bill and Andy!!

The results of the competition are as follows;

#### Class A

- 1st - John Banholzer - Rockingham, VT
- 2nd - Tony West - Rockingham, VT
- 3rd - Chris Tufts - Agawam, MA

#### Class B

- 1st - Scott Tanguay\* - Agawam, MA
- 2nd - Chipper Fletcher - Rockingham, VT
- 3rd - Rob Maskell - Colchester, VT

\* Note: Scott Tanguay (insert) was National Champion in straight trucks last year at the Food Industry National Championships in Atlanta, GA.

## MPDA NEWS NEW 511

The Federal Communications Commission approved in July 2000, the designation of 511 as a universal access number for travel information, much the same way 911 is used to report emergencies. MDOT will be implementing a 511 Interactive Voice Response System, which will be deployed May 15th of this year. As part of this deployment we will be deploying our 511 website on Monday March 10th. A bulk mailing will be going out to a "limited" mailing comprising of mainly trucking industry interests and to the legislature.

The website can be accessed at [www.511Maine.com](http://www.511Maine.com). The official URL name will be [www.511Maine.gov](http://www.511Maine.gov). and will be "pointed" to the website in the near future.

Information on how to use the website can be viewed at the bottom of the 511 web page under the "About 511" topic.

*Roger Sproul*

### 2003 NORTHERN CONVOY

The Northern Convoy For Kids will soon have a web site that will display sponsors, pictures, articles of interest, registration forms, and much more. The webpage address for Northern Convoy has been registered as [www.northernconvoyforkids.org](http://www.northernconvoyforkids.org) for the next two years.

The web site has a first class design done by Sephone Internet solutions located in down town Bangor. The work on the web site began in July and should be up and running by the end of August or the beginning of September.

The Northern Convoy Committee members and the MPDA officers feel that this is an important new tool to inform and stay connected to the MPDA members, the public, as well as give recognition for all that make the Northern Convoy a success.

Please save the above address and check the web site when it starts running - you'll be pleased.

*Stan McLaughlin.*

### QUIET SUMMER

Hi !! Just wanted to let everyone know that it has been a good summer for the trucking companies. I haven't heard too much about any major accidents with all the construction and tourists.

Also, I am curious to know if everyone is ready for the new HOS? If anyone has any tips they would like to pass on about how to prepare for the new HOS I encourage you to send them along to our newsletter editor for him to place in our newsletter for others to hear and read about.

And remember... School has started. So PLEASE drive carefully and watch out for our future.

*Laurie Pelletier*

*AG of Maine Transportation Department*

### RUBBERNECKING DISTRACTS MORE THAN CELL PHONES

#### Cell Phones Rank Sixth on List of Causes of Accidents

Chatting on a cell phone while driving may have gotten a bad rap in recent years as a common cause of car crashes, but a new study shows cell phones can't hold a candle to good, old-fashioned rubbernecking when it comes to causing a high-way pile up.

In one of the largest studies to date on crashes involving distracted drivers, researchers found looking at other accidents, traffic, or roadside incidents caused the largest number of accidents, while cell phone use ranked only sixth.

The study was based on data collected by Virginia state troopers on more than 2,700 crashes involving distracted drivers between June and November 2002.

Researchers found that of all the crashes reported, 98% involved a single distracted driver.

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# MPDA CALENDAR OF EVENTS –2003

(As of August 25, 2003)

## September

- 20 - Emery-Waterhouse Driving Competition** - Emery Parking Lot, Portland - contact Andy Reed at (603)-433-5880 or <Andrew\_C\_Reed@ryder.com>  
**21 - H.P. Hood Driving Competition** - 7:00am - Emery Parking Lot, Portland - contact Andy Reed at (603)-433-5880 or <Andrew\_C\_Reed@ryder.com>  
**27 - MPDA General Meeting** - Hannaford Trucking, S. Portland – 9:00am– contact Dick Brown at <rbrown9@maine.rr.com> or 318-7395  
**30 - So. Convoy Committee Meeting** - Old Country Buffet Rest., Maine Mall - 6:30pm - contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net > or 727-5349

## October

- 1-4 - US Professional Truck Driving Championships** - Milwaukee  
**4 - Sysco Competition** - Westbrook, Maine - contact Andy Reed at (603)-433-5880 or <Andrew\_C\_Reed@ryder.com>  
**11 - Convoy Set-up Day** – 9:00am – Portland - contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net > or 727-5349  
**12 - Maine Trucking for Kids Convoy**, 7:00am - Portland/South Portland - contact Jim Costa at <jcosta@sacoriver.net> or 727-5349  
**18 - MPDA Membership Training**, 7:30am registration & sign in - 8:00am, seminar starts - MMTA Office - Augusta, Maine - contact Fred Thompson at <TFthomp5349@aol.com> or 207-582-1343  
**26 - 8<sup>th</sup> Annual N. H. Truckers Drive for Kids** – Location TBA - Contact Linda Rafeal at 603-435-6366 or <micrafeal@aol.com>  
**25 - MPDA Officers Meeting** - Yarmouth Lumber - Gray, Maine - 9:00AM - contact Dick Brown at <rbrown9@maine.rr.com> or 318-7395

## November

- 1 - 14<sup>th</sup> Annual MPDA Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet** – Location and time to be announced - contact Terry Stuart at 727-3704 or <tlstuart@adelphia.net>

## January 2004

- 24 - MPDA Membership Training**, “Secure Cargo” & “ Safe Operation of Tankers” - contact Fred Thompson at <TFthomp5349@aol.com> or 207-582-1343

## February 2004

- 28 - MPDA ROADTEAM Meeting** - TBA - contact Fred Thompson at <TFthomp5349@aol.com> or 207-582-1343

## April 2004

- 24 - MPDA Membership Training**, “Defensive Driving” - contact Fred Thompson at <TFthomp5349@aol.com> or 207-582-1343

(Please send any additions or changes to: Denis Litalien at 282-6346 or e-mail at [dentruck@hotmail.com](mailto:dentruck@hotmail.com))

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"We've known for years that drivers contribute more to causing crashes than the vehicle or the roadway," says Robert Breitenbach, director of the Transportation Safety Training Center at Virginia Commonwealth University, in a news release. "In many instances the driver error involves not paying attention to the driving task. We can now identify those distractions with some confidence."

Rubbernecking was responsible for the largest number of accidents reported (16%) followed by driver fatigue (12%), looking at scenery or landmarks (10%), passenger or child distractions (9%), adjusting the radio, tape, or CD player (7%), and cell phone use (5%).

Overall, various distractions inside the vehicle accounted for 62% of the distractions reported. Distractions that came from outside the vehicle accounted for 35% of all distractions, and 3% of the distractions were undetermined.

Nearly two-thirds of the crashes in the study occurred in rural areas and were often caused by driver fatigue, insects entering or striking the vehicle, or animals and unrestrained pet distractions.

Automobile accidents caused by distracted drivers in urban areas tended to be the result of drivers looking at other crashes, traffic, or vehicles or cell phone use.

Researcher James M. Ellis of Virginia Commonwealth University says the findings should apply to other regions of the U.S. because the areas studied contained a representative mix of rural and urban counties, a diverse ethnic population, and varying road conditions and types.

SOURCES: "Pilot Study of Distracted Drivers," prepared for the Transportation and Safety Training Center, Center for Public Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University, January 2003. News release, Virginia Commonwealth University.

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## FMCSA DROPS THREE PROPOSED RULES

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration last week withdrew three proposed rules that would have changed the requirement that drivers speak and read English, codified out-of-services criteria and lifted restrictions on placing television and data display screens in vehicles.

In the July 24 Federal Register, FMCSA withdrew a 1997 proposal that would have weakened the requirement that commercial drivers must be able to read and speak English well enough to read road signs and communicate with other drivers and law enforcement officials.

FMCSA also said it would drop a 1998 proposal to include the North American Uniform Out-of-Service Criteria, currently published by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

And FMCSA kept restrictions on where television receivers are positioned in commercial motor vehicles. The agency said the rule was needed to prohibit drivers from watching television but that enforcement personnel could allow collision-avoidance equipment such as side-view cameras. Sean McNally

This story appeared in the July 28 print edition of Transport Topics.

### FMCSA Proposes Holding Driver Records 3 Years

A rule proposed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration would require trucking companies to hold onto driver safety records for three years for prospective employers to review, up from two years now.

The proposal, published in the July 17 Federal Register, would compel a driver's previous employer to maintain records on work history, reportable accidents and alcohol and controlled substance use. Prospective employers could request those records, and a driver's previous employer would have 30 days to turn them over for review.

"What it's doing is allowing employers to deny positions to drivers who, prior to this rule, may have been hired despite poor safety records," FMCSA spokeswoman Suzy Bohnert told Transport Topics.

The proposed rule supplements an interim rule published in March 1996, Bohnert said. Under the original rule, she said, employers were required to hold onto driver records for just two years.

The comment period for the proposed new rule ends Sept. 2, FMCSA said. Sean McNally

*This story appeared in the July 21 2003 print edition of Transport Topics.*

## FATALITIES FROM TRUCK-INVOLVED CRASHES DECLINE IN 2002

The number of fatalities from truck-involved crashes declined 4.2% to 4,897 in 2002, from 5,111 the previous year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

This compares with a rise in the total number of people who died on the nation's highways. NHTSA said 42,815 people

died in 2002, an increase of 1.5% from 2001. That is the highest number of fatalities since 1990, NHTSA said in a July 17 release.

Last year marked the first time the annual figure of fatalities from truck-involved crashes dropped below 5,000 since 1995.

"While this continues a positive trend of reduced fatalities, we believe that additional commonsense steps can save more lives," American Trucking Associations Chief Executive Bill Graves said in a statement this week. "If we all insist on increased, visible traffic enforcement for cars and trucks -- especially for speeders -- then we'll continue to see the numbers move in the right direction."

The number of truck occupants killed in these crashes declined 3.4% to 684, while the number of other-vehicle occupants killed declined 2.8%, and pedestrian and non-occupants dropped 18%, NHTSA said.

NHTSA also said the total number of people injured in truck-related crashes declined 0.8% to 130,000.

NHTSA said it annually collects crash statistics from all 50 states and the District of Columbia to produce the annual report on traffic fatality trends.

*From Transport Topics*

## U.S. REJECTS PLAN TO LET DRIVERS UNDER 21 OPERATE TRUCKS

TCA Had Proposed Interstate Commerce Program in 2000

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration on Monday rejected a proposal to let some drivers younger than 21 operate trucks as large as 80,000 pounds on interstate trips.

In its Federal Register filing, FMCSA cited a lack of safety evidence in rejecting the pilot program recommended by about 500 members of the Truckload Carriers Association.

The agency was "unable to conclude that the baseline safety performance of these younger drivers is sufficiently close to that of older drivers," it said.

Transport Topics reported last October that Congress had prohibited FMCSA from spending any money on this proposed project.

TCA, which first submitted the proposal in 2000, said at the time a strong U.S. economy created demand for additional truck drivers. The program called for 48 weeks of training at a licensed driving school and then several months of highway trips with older drivers.

However, insurers and safety groups opposed the plan because younger drivers have more accidents, Bloomberg reported.

Federal rules require drivers to be at least 21 to operate a commercial motor vehicle in interstate commerce. Most states currently allow people between 18 and 21 to drive trucks in intrastate commerce.

*From Transport Topics*

## Administrative FINAL NOTICE!

As has been mentioned in the past few issues of Behind the Wheel, it is time once again, for the election of offi-

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cers. September 20th is the final date for accepting nominations.

The following positions are up for vote:	
President,	Vice President,
Secretary,	Treasurer,
Membership Officer,	Publicity Officer,
Legislative Officer,	TDC Officer.

Anyone interested in running for or making a nomination should contact Terry Stuart, either by email <tstuart@mainepda.org> or send your nomination via the Post Office @ 366 Saco Road, Hollis, Maine, 04042.

If you are considering running and you have questions about a certain position, feel free to contact any current officer about any position in MPDA. Come and join in on a worthy cause. It may not take as much of your time as you might think.

Election results will be announced at the annual banquet in November.

*Terry Stuart, Secretary MPDA*

## **BTW'S SAFE DRIVING TOPIC**

### **"PASSING"**

There is most likely not a day of driving that goes by, in the life of the professional truck driver, that doesn't involve the passing or overtaking of other vehicles. While the maneuver itself is not all that difficult there are a few safety tips that should be observed. Passing on multi-lane divided highways is relatively simple while passing on two lane rural roads requires a little more attention. There are three basic questions a driver should ask before making a pass.

Is the pass necessary and what are my options?

Is it safe? Is it legal?

The first of the above questions is very important to those of us whom drive rpm and speed challenged trucks. The last thing you want to do is get into the passing lane and drive there for miles trying to pass another vehicle, especially another rpm or speed challenged truck. So before that happens backing of the throttle one or two mph, to be courteous and professional, might be the better option.

Okay you have answered the above questions and you have the speed and power, so let's go already. Be sure to pull out to pass before you put yourself into a tailgate situation. I know that's not always easy in traffic but remember our talk in a previous issue about following distance and how important that is. So here we go

Check all your mirrors to be sure no one is along side you. Signal your intent to pass. (Communication is very important) Move into the passing lane smoothly. (No Whipping) Keep your vehicle completely in your lane as you pass. (Don't drift into the other lane)

When you have a safe distance between you and the vehicle you have passed, generally 80 to 100 feet, signal your intent to return to the travel lane. (Leave extra space for smaller vehicles pulling camper trailers, boats, snowmobiles, etc. as these vehicles have a tendency to be operated by inexperienced drivers and may be subject to wind turbulence created by your vehicle.) Don't rely on another drivers flashing headlights as

your signal to pull over. It's your responsibility to make sure you are clear to pull back into the travel lane.

Check your mirrors and be on the lookout for those impatient drivers who might try to overtake you on the right before you can safely return to the travel lane. Pull back into the travel lane and maintain your speed.

Whenever possible don't pass other vehicles at busy on ramps, and construction zones.

As I stated above, passing on a two lane rural highway requires more thought. When you move into the passing lane on a two-lane road you have just entered into the opposing traffic lane of travel, which can be very dangerous, if you do not have enough time to pass safely. I have recently read of a number of head on collisions between vehicles passing on two lane roads, or drifting across the centerline into opposing traffic. Use extreme caution when driving on two lane roads and be extra cautious if you intend to pass on a two-lane road. If you are not sure you have enough time or space it's better to err on the side of safety than to end up in a serious collision. That's it for this issue. Next time we'll talk about **Distractions**. By the way I know all of you know how to drive. These are friendly reminders to keep us all sharp, myself included. Remember to be Safe, Courteous, Professional, and Friendly out there on the boulevard. The motoring public is watching.

*Fred Thompson*

### ***Behind the Wheel Newsletter***

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MPDA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting courtesy, safety and professionalism in the field of commercial driving.

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