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COVER

“Confusing, Ain’t It”
 Unknown photographer

Walking The Walk

by James J. Baxter, President, NMA

State Legislatures are in full song, cranking out new and imaginative ways to overcome huge deficits created by bloated budgets in the late 1990's. To no one's surprise, motorists are seen as prime candidates to fill the financial gap. Red light cameras, photo radar, doubling and tripling of fines, .08 BAC laws, surcharges on top of surcharges, increased registration fees, creating new crimes like primary belt laws and cell phone usage, and lowering speed limits are just some of the wonderful ideas our elected officials are considering. Not a day goes by that we aren't sending out **Legislative Alerts** or hunting up spokespersons to appear at legislative hearings.

With 50 state legislatures and the monolith we call the federal government, the task seems a little daunting. Still, in those states where we have a **State Chapter Coordinator** and/or **Activists**, we have a fighting chance to stem the tide of bad laws and exploitive regulation. We also have active members (sans title) who carry the ball in their states and keep tabs on legislative events and help us put forth the NMA position. That said, it is clearly obvious that we need to build the breadth and depth of our grass roots network.

Maybe you've given some thought to being more active in the NMA? At the same time, you may not have a good idea just what's expected of an Activist or State Chapter Coordinator (SCC)?

Let me start by explaining that these are real jobs with real responsibilities. The most important and most demanding position is that of State Chapter Coordinator. The SCC has several obligations and for that reason the position is provided a modest financial stipend to cover out-of-pocket expenses. The SCC may also apply for additional funding for state-based projects. In addition to keeping

the NMA National Office informed on state issues and legislation, the SCC is required to communicate important matters to the state membership on a regular basis. The NMA National Office handles the printing and distribution of this communication.

State Chapter Coordinators are further required to become familiar with their state's legislative system, traffic laws, and traffic court system. This knowledge is key to affecting the legislative process and aiding and guiding NMA members. Other duties include being the NMA's state spokesperson, approving the appointment of Activists, and a host of optional tasks that support and grow the state chapter.

If this seems like a real handful for a volunteer, you're right. The trade-off is that as an SCC, you will have credibility, authority, and support when dealing with public officials, the press, and other organizations. You will be in a position to affect real change. If the "system" is driving you crazy and you feel frustrated and impotent, here's your chance to take concrete action, for yourself as well as motorists in general.

If you'd like more information on becoming an SCC (or an Activist) contact the NMA National Office via telephone, e-mail or letter. We can answer your questions directly and we have materials prepared that explain these positions in detail. I might add that there are instructional materials and opportunities to learn from other NMA activists. Let us hear from you! ☺

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Just The Way Things Are

by Eric Skrum, Managing Editor

read an article in the *Wall Street Journal* called, *How Humans React When Bad Things Occur Again and Again*, by Sharon Begley. This article was exploring the reaction of Americans to the tragic accident of the *Columbia* space shuttle as it returned to Earth.

The premise was that because of a similar event (the *Challenger* explosion 17 years ago), the public was not as shocked. They even had a term for this, *habituation*. Their definition was "repeated exposure to a particular stimulus, even a painful or horrific one, evokes less and less reaction with each subsequent exposure."

In other words, because it happens so often, we become used to it. We don't question it, because "*that's the way things are.*"

This is a prevailing attitude in our country. For example, an article in the *Macomb Daily* concerning Mount Clemens, Michigan clearly showed that traffic tickets were being issued for revenue. It seems that the police are writing fewer tickets because of additional duties the officers have been assigned. The official response to this occurrence?

The city complained of the loss of money.

"My long-term concern is the violations represent a revenue-generating stream, and that needs to be addressed," City Commissioner David Herrington said. "...if this trend continues, I'm going to be greatly disappointed."

And, not once did the reporter question this practice. The whole focus of the article was the city's budget problems, not the ethics of writing tickets solely for money rather than safety.

Has a police car with no sirens or lights on passed you while it was going 5, 10, or even 15 mph over the speed limit? Although this is a frequent occurrence, there is no public outcry against the hypocrisy of these actions.

Police quotas are a reality. "Professional courtesy" from one officer to another regarding traffic tickets is rampant.

And, this is where *habituation* towards traffic seems to fit. These actions have occurred every single day for years to the point that most drivers don't question it. Most people will say, "That's just the way it is."

But, that is not the way it has to be! The NMA is proof of that. Over the years, the NMA has helped people speak out against these practices. And, now as cash-strapped states and cities are leaning even harder on motorists to help fill their coffers, the NMA is hearing from more and more drivers that don't like "the way things are."

But we can always use more voices to speak out. Do you have a friend or family member who might be interested in the NMA? Tell them about the NMA and encourage them to join. Don't settle for the response of, "I'll think about it." Follow up in a day or a week and send them a brochure from the NMA or better yet, send them a past issue of *NMAF NEWS*. The NMA office has many brochures and issues of *NMAF NEWS* that we would be happy to send to you for this purpose. All you have to do is contact the NMA office and we'll ship them right out. To order any of our free information, please call 800-882-2785 or email us at nma@motorists.org.

The only way that "the way things are" will ever become "the way things should be" is for all of us to speak out. ☞

Sleeping It Off

If you are impaired, pulling over and waiting for someone to drive you home might not be enough according to an Arizona State Court of Appeals. The Court ruled that those who pull over to "sleep off" the alcohol must surrender physical control of the vehicle. If they don't, they must submit to a DUI test or face the penalties of a one-year driver's license suspension.

This is the ruling from Shelly Potter's case. She had pulled into a

service station, called friends to pick her up, then went back to her car. She was taking a nap in the driver's seat (keys still in the ignition and car headlights on) when an officer pulled up and noticed open containers in the vehicle. The officer spoke with her and noted the smell of alcohol and blood-shot eyes. He then arrested her. When she was asked to take a breathalyzer test, she refused.

Arizona law states that if you refuse to submit to a DUI test, you

lose your license, which is exactly what happened to Potter.

One of the points of this decision was that the Court of Appeals agreed that there is no clear set of rules on this type of case. The only guidance is that in order to avoid prosecution; a driver must give up physical control of the vehicle.

The Court of Appeals panel itself said that physical control is difficult

continued on page four

Sweet Danger

By James R. Campbell

In 1985 I was diagnosed with Type Two Diabetes. For those unfamiliar with diabetes, Type Two is the type that normally attacks middle aged people and is caused because their cells have become resistant to the insulin produced by the pancreas causing glucose (sugar) buildup in the blood. My illness progressed rapidly and in 1990 I began using insulin. One problem with insulin is that if one takes more insulin than required (measuring correctly is sometimes difficult), it can cause a potentially fatal reaction by reducing blood glucose to the point where one goes into blackout, then a coma and then death. Unfortunately, this process also mimics the actions of a person who has had too much to drink, sometimes even to causing one to emit the odor of alcohol.

On July 10, 2002 I was driving home when I had a sudden and totally unexpected insulin reaction. (I should mention that with modern insulin, these reactions are very rare and my doctors have approved my driving and flying [I'm a retired U. S. Marine fighter pilot and currently fly gliders or sailplanes.]) I went into a blackout condition and for some reason continued to drive for a couple of miles until I had a minor accident hitting a vehicle stopped to make a turn. Unaware of the accident, I continued slowly for about two blocks and then was stopped by the police.

I was pulled from my car and handcuffed. The combination of the pain from the handcuffs and being dragged out of my car must have triggered some sort of reaction sufficient to partially bring me around. The police kept asking where had I been drinking and gave me a breath test which I passed with a zero (I don't drink at all). They apparently decided that the breath device was defective and gave me a second test which also resulted in a reading of zero. I tried to

tell the officer I was diabetic (which he noted on the arrest record) and I wear a medic alert bracelet and carry an alert card in my wallet. However, the officer insisted that I was drunk or on drugs and locked me in the back of his squad car while handcuffed and left me unattended for about an hour. This, in spite of the fact that a major fire and rescue squad station was nearby and my condition could have been readily verified and treatment administered.

The officer then decided to give me further testing and took me to the emergency room of a major local hospital for blood alcohol testing. Now, keep in mind that I hardly fit the typical DUI profile. Twice, I've blown a zero on a breath test, I'm sixty-six years old, and I'm driving an antique (black plates) Porsche that is fully restored to "as-new" condition. When we got to the hospital, I asked for a glucose test that came up with a reading of 42 or very low. I still was required by the officer to take yet another blood test for drugs and alcohol with both having negative results. Once my condition was known, I was immediately given juice and crackers, an EKG, and placed on a life support monitor. The officer, who was now somewhat irked because the medical folks were keeping me, allowed me to call my wife (We live about two miles from the hospital.) after more than three and a half hours. He then came over and told me he wasn't going to lock me up that night, but I would have to come to the station the next morning and turn myself in for charges of DUI and hit/run. I was still a bit disoriented and unable to question or argue at that time, and frankly I was just happy to see him leave.

I ended up being restricted to Virginia and had to appear in court for felony hit/run and DUI. After two appearances, the prosecutor agreed to Nolle Prose (a voluntary declining of prosecution) the charges. I was

dumbfounded at this decision! Both of my doctors and the physician at the emergency ward had been willing to testify to my condition. And, I'd had three tests for drugs and alcohol, all negative. Then I learned if one is arrested for a felony or DUI in Virginia and is Nolle Prossed, the arrest record still stands and one can be denied a job, the ability to purchase a gun, denied a security clearance, and the charges can be brought up again and again. I had to go back to court again, with yet another lawyer and additional expense, to get the record expunged.

I wish I could say this was a positive learning experience, but it was not. My wife and I are both retired from the Marine Corps and have always been supportive of the legal system. That has changed. My experience with the arresting officer that ignored my life threatening condition and a judicial system that caused me great expense to prove what had to be glaringly obvious has converted my unquestioning acceptance of the legal system to distrust and skepticism. 🙄

Sleeping It Off

continued from page three

to define. Some agencies offer the advice that if you are going to pull to the side of the road, the driver should pull the keys from the ignition and actually go to the back seat to illustrate that you have given up control of the vehicle. Others say that if you do call for a ride, you should not enter your vehicle again to avoid prosecution.

The key is that motorists who have decided to "sleep it off" on the side of the road or in a parking lot must use caution to ensure they aren't punished for making the right decision. 🙄

The Mysteries Of Blood Alcohol Content

Despite the government's relentless campaigns against drinking, and drinking and driving, zero effort has been made to explain how blood alcohol content is influenced by factors beyond alcohol consumption.

Most people know that body size can effect Blood Alcohol Content (BAC). A large person can typically consume more alcohol than a small person can before reaching the same BAC level. Women and persons of Asian heritage are assumed to reach higher BAC levels on less alcohol, however this may be complicated by the "size" aspect just described.

One of the lesser-known factors affecting BAC levels is "time." Government media campaigns often refer to how many drinks an average man or woman can drink in one hour before reaching a BAC of .08 percent or .10 percent. These are extremely dishonest and deceptive claims. This dishonesty and deception is compounded by gimmicky exhibitions where celebrities or journalists are fed large quantities of alcohol over a short period of time (maximizing the effect) and then doing breathalyzer tests that show the participants supposedly are still within legal limits for driving. The intended conclusion being that legal BAC levels are too high, as it is clear the participants are intoxicated and incapable of driving safely. They never go on to explain that an hour later the BAC levels of those same participants may be more than double the legal limits.

Blood alcohol levels climb for up to three hours (sometimes up to six hours!) after the last drink is consumed. Therefore, while it may be true that BAC levels may not exceed legal levels in that first hour of consumption, they will exceed legal levels in the second or third

hour after consumption ceased.

The "effects" of alcohol (e.g. euphoria, relaxation, and impairment) do not directly track BAC levels under moderate consumption situations. The body does compensate, to a degree, for alcohol in the system. Even though the BAC level may elevate after consumption ceases, the "effect" diminishes. Consequently, how you "feel" or perform are not accurate indicators of your BAC level.

Consuming food while drinking will slow alcohol absorption, but it will also prolong the period of BAC elevation. If drinks are consumed

...many of the strategies people practice to avoid driving in an impaired or illegal mode work directly to their disadvantage...

without food, the BAC level will rise and fall relatively quickly, following the cessation of drinking. Conversely, if drinks are consumed with food, the BAC level will rise and fall over a longer period of time. It's also important to know that common substances like aspirin can elevate BAC levels.

The difference between so-called "experienced" and "inexperienced" drinkers is not their respective BAC levels, but rather how their bodies adapt, or don't adapt, to the presence of alcohol. Two persons of similar size can have identical BAC levels, but have very disparate responses in terms of effects. In other words, one person with a BAC of .12 can experience a high degree of impairment while there may be minimal affect on another person with the same BAC.

So what does this all mean, from a practical perspective? For starters, many of the strategies people practice to avoid driving in an

impaired or illegal mode work directly to their disadvantage should they be stopped by law enforcement officers. Eating while drinking and discontinuing drinking and waiting for a period of time before driving home, both put you at risk. Even though the "effects" of drinking diminish, BAC levels will continue to elevate for two or three hours after you cease drinking. This means it is likely your BAC level will be at its maximum should you be stopped for law enforcement purposes. Sadly, your chances to avoid an illegal BAC reading would be better if you bolted for the door the instant your glass was empty.

And, using how you feel as an indicator of when to drive is equally precarious. Sitting around two hours drinking soft drinks, doing the responsible thing, could result in handcuffs and an unpleasant ride in the backseat of a police cruiser.

What this actually amounts to is the prosecution and punishment of persons who have taken precautions to act in a responsible and safe fashion! The current standards put driving safely and driving legally in opposition to one another.

If illegal per se BAC levels were a more legitimate, .12 percent to .15 percent, the conundrums just discussed would not be a serious issue. But, with illegal BAC levels of .10 percent, or worse yet .08 percent, being drunk or significantly impaired, is not the determining factor in a DWI case. Rather, it's the vagaries of arbitrary BAC levels and burned out license plate bulbs. ☞

*Have a **friend** join the NMA and you'll get an extra three months of membership*

FREE!

Focusing On Seat Belt Use—Terrorists Can Wait

by Eric Peters

Which presents the greater threat to you and your family—an unbuckled motorist or a terrorist intent on blowing you up? The answer is obvious—or ought to be. And yet, in this time of terror alerts and war, politicians in many states are aggressively promoting so-called "primary enforcement" of seat belt laws that would empower police to pull over motorists simply for not buckling up.

It's bad enough that police are becoming lifestyle police—enforcing edicts that haven't got anything to do with preventing crime or protecting the safety and well-being of other people. Worse, though, is the diversion of always-limited police resources away from serious problems to "do-goodism" patrol. There are only so many hours in a shift—and only so many officers on the road at any given

time. Every moment spent sitting by the side of the road in a seat belt trap is time *not* being spent looking for more serious problems. While Officer Friendly is busy writing you a henpecky piece of payin' paper for your big-time crime, Osama bin Laden himself could have rolled right on—winking at you in the rearview mirror.

But he's buckled-up for safety.

It's ironic in a mean-spirited sort-of-way that our obsession with codifying "safety" legislation and enforcing such measures at the point of a gun (or ticket book) has developed as we've become less safe—and less free. In the pre-air bag, pre-child seat, pre-seat belt law America of the not-so-distant past, cops spent the majority of their time pursuing actual criminals—and we had less crime. We had less safety equipment—and were more safe.

Maybe now we're trying to put the

toothpaste back in the tube by erecting an official safety state to forcibly recreate the calmer, saner world of yesterday. But it's not going to work any more successfully than saying "pretty please" will make Osama reconsider his evil plans.

We have to be practical, especially these days—and wasting police manpower and time over trivial (in the grand scheme of things), and certainly non-criminal lifestyle decisions, such as not buckling-up, is something we just can't afford.

Seat belt checkpoints are not going to make us any safer—and the distraction they create may allow a genuinely bad fish get through the net.

*Eric Peters is a Washington-based automotive writer and the Autos Columnist for **America Online**, **Netscape** and **CompuServe**. EPeters952@aol.com.*

Laser Jammer Testing Follow-Up

by Thomas Frank, Rhode Island State Chapter Coordinator

In the November/ December 2002 issue of the *NMAF NEWS*, John Carr, *Massachusetts Activist*, wrote an article on the tests that we conducted on laser jammers. In the following issue, a member wrote a letter wondering if the reason the NMA didn't publish more articles of this nature was because it was too controversial.

It's not that the issue of countermeasures is controversial, it's that the entire subject area is very expensive to explore—and all the funding for the equipment comes out of the pocket of the authors of the article. So what gets tested is what we are most interested in and can afford. Since laser is becoming a serious threat

(one which even an excellent detector may not save you from), and happens to be more or less legal to deal with, it made sense to spend some money there and explore the possibilities.

Since jamming RADAR is illegal (not to mention very expensive to do properly), it isn't a subject we're likely to explore very much.

Just remember that those passive jammers you see advertised and the ones that claim to be legal (they aren't, but that's beside the point) don't work at all. Save your money and buy a really good detector.

If you've got lots of money and really want to explore the wonderful world of RADAR jamming, I recommend the following reading:

- *Electronic Countermeasures*, Peninsula Publishing, ISBN 0-932146-00-7 1961/1978
- *Principles of Electronic Warfare*, Peninsula Publishing
- "Can Hams Counter Police RADAR", *73 Magazine*, May 1978, pg 80
- "Build This RADAR Speed-Gun Calibrator", *Radio-Electronics Magazine*, August 1986 pg 47
- *Principles of Naval Weapons Systems*, USN, NAVEDTRA 37082
- *RADAR Handbook*, Merrill Skolnik, McGraw Hill, ISBN 0-07-057913-X

Enjoy the research! 

Speed Cameras Across The Pond

by James C. Walker

My wife and I spent about 2,000 miles with a Geodesy GATSO camera finder in Great Britain loaned to us by Roy Milnes (of the *Association of Drivers Against Daytime Running Lights*) and would purchase this unit or one of its clones if we ever moved to Britain. These cameras are for speed enforcement. And similar to the USA, enforcement of these limits is set up primarily for stealing the contents of your wallet and has little or nothing to do with safety.

GATSO cameras are mounted on a pole a bit higher than the car itself. They shoot pictures of the rear of speeding cars going across a set of painted hash marks on the road surface beyond the camera. GATSO camera areas normally have warning signs in advance of the camera(s)—plus the hash marks are VERY visible. An attentive driver will see the danger spots (in most cases) in plenty of time to momentarily slow down, and then return to their safe cruising speed.

The Geodesy works by having a GPS database of all known camera locations. You place the unit on your dashboard (up behind the wipers) where it gets a good view of the sky. Approaching a known GATSO in the database, the unit has a growing progression of warning lights like a *Valentine One Radar Detector*. As you near the camera, the lights go red and the unit beeps and flashes the lights insistently. You can stop the warning noise with a mute button. In most cases, the unit was accurate within 50-100 feet of the actual hash marked area of danger. The warning lights recede as you are past the point. The unit and its clones cost about \$500-600 USD (United States Dollars).

You can update the database in two ways. If a new camera is installed that you see, you can press the mute button just as you enter the painted hash marked area. This will record that point in your unit and you will be

warned of that location the next time you pass. For an annual fee of about \$50 USD, you can plug in via the telephone to periodically update your database. The database also reads the points where owners have entered new locations and, after verification, adds them to the national database.

We did see a number of areas with hash lines following camera warning signs, but with no cameras. These could be for portable cameras and were often in tourist areas that might be monitored only when lots of tourists were likely. They could also be places where new cameras are about to be installed or where unprofitable cameras had been removed.

Some cameras were seen on the motorways, but typically only in or near congested urban areas. We did not see cameras "out in the middle of nowhere." In those areas, the default speed limit is 70 mph. On three-lane motorways, the left (slow) lane is going 65-70 mph and has most of the lorries and the 1.0 liter cars and the middle lane has the families going 75-85 mph. The right (fast) lane is usually for passing at 85-95 mph and then you move back over to the middle or left lane as space is available.

Needless to say, we saw quite a bit of the right lane in another thoroughly enjoyable time in Britain where the driving is a *lot* more challenging and a *lot* more fun. We also noted with pleasure that in over 2,000 total miles, we encountered only one intersection with a stop sign. Every other intersection was a *give way* (Yield) protocol, a roundabout, or had traffic lights. The system is enormously more efficient, creates far less noise, and reduces vehicle emissions. In my opinion, it is also probably far too logical for the *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration* and most *Department of Transportations* to ever adopt. 🐾

Pay To Drive

London Mayor Ken Livingston has a plan to ease traffic congestion. Make drivers pay.

If motorists wish to drive into central London (a crowded eight-square-mile area), they must pay \$8 a day. Those who frequent this area may pay monthly or annually.

The way will not be blocked by toll booths. Drivers can pay the charge by phone, in person at various locations, online, or by mail. The area will also be watched by 800 cameras. Computers will check plate numbers against a database and those who haven't paid will be fined.

Officials are predicting this toll will cut the volume of traffic in the zone by 20 percent, ease congestion, and raise \$208 million a year.

The plan began on February 17, 2003 and after the first day, officials said some 10,000 drivers had evaded the fee. They have until midnight of that day to settle up, or face a \$65 fine. The penalty jumps to \$130 after two weeks and \$200 after 28 days. As of press time of this newsletter, there was no report on how many paid the toll before being fined.

Also, Mayor Bloomberg and other New York City officials have expressed interest in this plan and will be monitoring it closely to determine if it could be applied to their city. 🐾

**The price of apathy
towards public affairs is
to be ruled by evil men.
—Plato**

What Really Happens During The Test

by Ivan Sever, Massachusetts State Chapter Coordinator

Until 1999, the yearly mandatory safety inspection in Massachusetts consisted of driving to a gas station where a mechanic stuck a probe in the tailpipe and asked you to sound the horn. The cost was \$15.

In order to qualify for federal *Environmental Protection Agency* dollars, Massachusetts switched over to a new "Enhanced Emissions & Safety Check" in October of 1999. The selling point (and the justification for the \$29 fee increase) was the dynamometer, which simulates real-world driving conditions. Since this test was said to be so accurate, the emission testing was now required only every other year although the safety test continues to be required

every year.

Because of the dynamometer, people are no longer allowed to sit in the car while it's being tested. Most are dealing with the longer wait by catching up on their paperwork or fetching a cup of coffee from the local Starbucks. But inquiring minds want to know what really happens during the test. So here is the scoop:

Starting in July 2003, Massachusetts is phasing in a more advanced computerized emissions test for all cars and light trucks made since model year 1996. This is the OBD check. OBD stands for "On-Board Diagnostics." Federal law requires cars and light trucks made since model year 1996 to be equipped with OBD. The mechanic simply connects the on-

board computer of your car, which continuously monitors the engine and emissions controls, to the inspection computer and downloads the data. If you pass the OBD check, you pass the inspection. If OBD detects a problem with your vehicle, you flunk and get a rejected sticker. The whole process takes about 5 minutes.

Remember, this is only every other year. During the safety-check-only years, the mechanic simply walks around your car and sounds the horn...

So why the 20-30 minute wait? To justify the higher cost, of course. And the kicker is that the rejection rate remains the same, around 10 percent since the 90's. The more things change, the more they remain the same. ☞

Sponsorship Grows

by Eric Skrum, Managing Editor

This is a follow-up to the article *Corporate Sponsorship Run Amok* which ran in the May/June 2002 issue of the *NMAF NEWS*. At that time, we reported on a new plan by the Mooresville, North Carolina Police. To recap, Mooresville Police Captain Leon White decided to take advantage of an offer by a company called *Government Acquisitions*. The deal allowed NASCAR sponsors to put their paint schemes on the town's police cars and in exchange the police received free cruisers.

This type of advertising could be seen as a conflict of interest. *Government Acquisitions* claims there is none since the advertisers are paying their company, not the police. Then *Government Acquisitions* donates the vehicles to the agency.

Also, only suitable advertisers will

be allowed. It is fine to have your police cruiser painted with NASCAR colors, but no alcohol, firearms, tobacco sponsors, or other "unsuitable" products are allowed. It makes you wonder if the NMA would be considered suitable...

While this type of "selling-out" may seem to be demeaning to the police, it is still a program that is expanding. Over 150 police departments in 29 states have signed contracts with *Government Acquisitions*. With cities and states suffering from budget shortfalls, it probably won't be very long until your traffic ticket will be issued from a cruiser with a big Burger King logo on it.

You can see examples of these cruisers on the *Government Acquisitions* web site at <http://governmentacquisitions.com> ☞

Italy Sets The Pace

Italy is raising their speed limit on some motorways to 93 mph. What is interesting about this is that it is being done as a safety measure. Transport Minister Pietro Lunardi says, "Higher speeds improve traffic flow and help motorists pay attention. Only 9 percent of fatal accidents were caused by speeding. Where it is safe to go faster, it is the right thing to do."

With headlines like "Italy Raises Speed Limits For Safer Motorways" and "Italy Raises Speed Limit To Save Lives On Motorways," the newspapers seem to agree as well. ☞

Words, Words, Words

The following article has circulated the Internet for some time so it was impossible to cite the original author. However, it is a great example of how words can be twisted to the point where a common every-day item becomes a dangerous substance of epic proportions. This is the same type of word spinning that we see spewing forth from safety organizations like the *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration* or *Mothers Against Drunk Driving*.

The key to this article is the term "Dihydrogen monoxide." If you don't know what it is (I didn't recognize it until after I read the article), don't worry. There will be a definition at the end.

The Invisible Killer

Dihydrogen monoxide (DMHO) is colorless, odorless, tasteless, and kills uncounted thousands of people every year. Most of these deaths are caused by accidental inhalation of DHMO, but the dangers of DHMO do not end there. Prolonged exposure to its solid form causes severe tissue damage. Symptoms of DHMO ingestion can include excessive sweating and urination, and possibly a bloated feeling, nausea, vomiting and body electrolyte imbalance. For those who have become dependent, DHMO withdrawal means certain death.

Dihydrogen monoxide:

- Is also known as hydroxyl acid, and is the major component of acid rain
- Contributes to the "greenhouse effect"
- May cause severe burns
- Contributes to the erosion of our natural landscape
- Accelerates corrosion and rusting of many metals
- May cause electrical failures and decreased effectiveness of automobile brakes
- Has been found in excised tumors of terminal cancer patients.

Contamination Is Reaching Epidemic Proportions!

Quantities of DHMO have been found in almost every stream, lake, and reservoir in America today. But the pollution is global, and the contaminant has even been found in Antarctic ice. DHMO has caused millions of dollars of property damage in the US.

Despite the danger, DHMO is used:

- As an industrial solvent and coolant
- In nuclear power plants
- In the production of styrofoam
- As a fire retardant
- In many forms of cruel animal research
- In the distribution of pesticides (Even after washing, produce remains contaminated by this chemical.)
- As an additive in certain "junk-foods" and other food products.

Companies dump waste DHMO into rivers and the ocean, and nothing can be done to stop them because this practice is still legal. The impact on wildlife is extreme, and we cannot afford to ignore it any longer!

The American government has refused to ban the production, distribution, or use of this damaging chemical due to its "importance to the economic health of this nation." In fact, the navy and other military organizations are conducting experiments with DHMO, and designing multi-billion dollar devices to control and utilize it during warfare situations. Hundreds of military research facilities receive tons of it through a highly sophisticated underground distribution network. Many store large quantities for later use.

The Horror Must Be Stopped!

Act *now* to prevent further contamination. Find out more about this dangerous chemical. What you don't know can hurt you and others throughout the world.

Editor's note: "Dihydrogen monoxide" is a term for "water." ☺

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News From Around The Country

For more information on these bills or for contact information for your legislators, you can visit the *Speak Out!* section of the NMA web site at www.motorists.org/speakout/state.html

You can also find NMA positions on any of these topics as well as talking points that you can use when contacting your legislators on these issues at www.motorists.org/issues/index.html.

Arizona

Senate Bill 1216 would change the seat belt law to Primary Enforcement which means the police would be able to pull you over solely because you weren't wearing your seat belt.

Colorado

Senate Bill 03-125 would strengthen open container carry restrictions, lower the BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) level to .08 percent, and enact a Primary Enforcement Seat Belt law.

Indiana

House Bill 1915 would increase the speed limit to 65 mph on all state highways.

House Bill 1418 subjects small truck passengers to primary seatbelt enforcement and harassment.

House Bill 1057 would apply more restrictions and punishments for those who don't have automobile insurance.

Senate Bill 3 would allow the use of red light cameras in Indiana.

Kansas

House Bill 2144 would authorize the use of red light cameras in Kansas.

Kentucky

House Bill 34 would set the speed limit at 70 mph on interstates and parkways in counties with a population of less than 75,000.

Maryland

House Bill 73 would ask that a vehicle being overtaken in the left lane give way to the right in favor of the vehicle behind them. In other words, a "slower traffic move right" law.

Massachusetts

Senate Bill 1276 authorizes the establishment of traffic violator schools as an alternative sentence for those convicted of certain motor vehicle violations.

Senate Bill 1288 authorizes the loss of your driver's license for refusal to take the breathalyzer test.

Senate Bill 1337 would enact a Primary Enforcement Seat Belt law.

Senate Bill 1377 and Senate Bill 1385 concerns unposted speed limits. Cities want permission to lower the legislated 30 mph.

House Bill 1173 and House Bill 1720 would enact an "aggressive driving" ticket that could be issued in addition to other tickets issued to you.

Michigan

Senate Bill 123, House Bill 4133 and House Bill 4224 would allow county road speed limits to be set by a majority vote of the county, State Police, and township board

Senate Bill 181, Senate Bill 182, and House Bill 4005 would lower the definitions of "under the influence" and "impaired driving" to .08 percent and .05 percent. They also provide sentencing guidelines.

Mississippi

House Bill 369, House Bill 555, House Bill 882, House Bill 1345, and Senate Bill 2030 would double the maximum amount of fines for speeding in highway work zones.

Senate Bill 2332 would do the same, but would also allow the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol to operate photo radar.

North Carolina

House Bill 26 would prohibit plate covers for your license plate.

North Dakota

House Bill 1439 would increase speed limits to 75 mph on the interstate.

New Mexico

Senate Bill 53 would prohibit cities from installing devices that force vehicles below the speed limit for the street. This bill seems to be focused on eliminating speed bumps.

Oregon

House Bill 2501 would allow the Department of Transportation to raise certain limits on the rural Interstates to 75 mph.

South Carolina

House Bill 3128 would enact a Primary Enforcement Seat Belt law.

West Virginia

House Bill 2203 combines lowering the BAC level from .10 percent to .08 percent with a Primary Enforcement Seat Belt law in the same bill.

Wisconsin

Assembly Bill 88 would lower the BAC from .10 percent to .08 percent.

Senate Bill 37 and Assembly Bill 90 would enact a Primary Enforcement Seat Belt law and increase the penalties for seat belt tickets from \$10 to \$25 for a first offense. 📧

Never blame a legislative body for not doing something. When they do nothing, that don't hurt anybody. When they do something is when they become dangerous.

—Will Rogers

The Experts' Corner

Do you have a question that only an expert can answer? If so, look no further. We have many NMA members with special fields of expertise. This feature was created to assist members with answers to both practical and technical questions.

This sharing of knowledge is another benefit of belonging to the NMA. Please indicate that you are an NMA member when calling a listed "Expert."

Can you help? Please contact us with your field of expertise and provide us with a contact address.

A telephone number would be very helpful, but is not required. Feel free to list preferred contact times if you do provide a telephone number.

PLEASE NOTE: This is not intended for listing of commercial business services.

As an NMA member, the Experts' Corner is available to you online at

<http://www.motorists.org/join/membersonly/experts.html>



MEMBERS WRITE

Your letters are welcomed and appreciated. This is a forum for diverse opinions, different perspectives, and personal experiences. Letters may be edited for length or clarity. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length. Full-length articles will also be considered for publication in the NMAF NEWS. Articles should not exceed 600 words in length. Positions and opinions expressed in letters and member-authored articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect NMA policies or objectives. To submit, you can email us at nma@motorists.org or mail to our NMAF Office.

I received a check from you as reimbursement under NMA's **Traffic Justice Program** for an unjust traffic ticket I was given in Virginia.

I wish to thank you for your enormous contribution to a very legitimate cause. I can assure you that the NMA will receive this money and more back from me in the future in the form of contributions.

Ramez A. Ghazzaoui
Washington, DC

This is regarding Michael Pelletier's letter in the January/February 2003 issue of **NMAF NEWS** about foiling speed traps. You should be very careful in exposing the tax collection called speed traps. You may be charged with interfering with police activities, which I believe is a pretty serious offense.

After years of thinking this over, I think I have a way that you won't get in trouble for alerting other motorists that there is a tax ahead. Get an orange safety cone and attach a sign that says something like "Go 25 mph," or whatever the posted limit is in that location. You have done nothing illegal and will cut into the tax collecting ability of that particular trap.

Tom McCarey
Berwyn, PA

The most recent newsletter was one of your best. It was nice to read

several articles on the things I am most irritated about, ie: tickets for revenue, lane courtesy, lame DUI laws. I am in full agreement with James Baxter (and most likely the rest of you) who believe that it's all about the money, not road safety.

Rich Orde
Green Bay, WI

Jim nailed it in this commentary, but as you already know it'll never happen.

Because as you already know we live amongst sheep...lots of sheep. Apathy is rampant. And, if the "sheeple" don't **force** the politicians to make these (and other desperately needed) changes, they're not going to, because as you have already pointed out, it's not about safety, it's about money....And, "they" can't get enough of it and won't ever be satisfied, even when they're getting 100 percent of it. (They are presently getting about 70 percent of it now, according to some reports I have seen.)

Our whole way of life continues to slide into the toilet at a faster and faster rate, and most are too uninformed to realize it, too apathetic to care, and too **gutless** to do anything about it even if they stood still long enough for you to tell them how.

Politicians, bureaucrats, and other agents of "the system" are self serving liars and thieves. Almost without exception they operate beyond the limits of their

Constitutional authority, and almost nobody seems willing to even learn about it much less do anything about it.

Anyway, you've got my support to the end... Thank you for all that you have done and are doing for all of us.

Dave Snellings
Crofton, MD

Regarding the article *Saving Lives!* by Eric Skrum in the January/February 2003 issue of **NMAF NEWS**, it seems to me that it really doesn't matter whether the objective of a red light camera is to increase revenue or not. If they reduce the number of people who do run red lights I'm all for them. Almost every day I have to wait at a green light while traffic continues through a red light on the cross street or the opposing turn lane. And once or twice a month, I pass by an accident at an intersection controlled by a traffic light. Speed, by itself, does not injure or kill anyone, but running a red light certainly will. This is why I support fighting speeding tickets, and also support red light cameras. I suspect that the reason Ventura, California's forecast of revenues from cameras was so far off was because once drivers realized that they might be ticketed for this offense **they stopped running red lights!**

An organization such as the

continued on next page

Members Write

continued from previous page

NMA should not, in my opinion, oppose traffic control measures that might actually improve safety.

George Cady
The Woodlands, TX

Editor's Note: I agree that the NMA shouldn't oppose traffic control measures that actually improve safety. However, I have yet to see any evidence that red light cameras are effective. On the other hand, I have seen quite a bit of evidence that shows that you can reduce the amount of red light violations by improving the engineering of the problem intersection.

If you go to www.motorists.org/issues/enforce/index.html you will find many studies and articles that cover the issue of photo enforcement, the problems associated with these devices, and alternative solutions to the problem of red light violations.

The January/ February 2003 issue of *NMAF NEWS* was an especially punchy issue with every article terse and mostly upsetting, as is appropriate.

Eric Peters, *The Vanishing Art of Moving Over*, page 4, expressed one of my long-term pet peeves. In extremis, I pass on the shoulder on the outside of curves! The problem became serious after the imposition of the 50 then 55 mph limit in 1974. Where the most fundamental rule of the US road for three-quarters of a century had been "Keep right except to pass," and before 1940, "Do not take your half out of the middle," the authorities stopped these admonishments in order to allow jams to set the de facto speed limits.

Tilted and tinted rear windows kill the effect of flashing headlights in daylight; loud sound systems

defeat horn blowing. These are reasons why emergency vehicles are so obnoxious in the US. I always used to tell myself to move over because the driver trying to get by might be more talented, or a police detective or FBI agent in a really unmarked vehicle is trying to rescue another. Perhaps this kind of exhortation would work now, "Let a possible FBI agent pursue the terrorist". And the corollary, "Get out of the way or the possible terrorist might shoot you."

Joel M. Kauffman
Wayne, PA

Eric Peters' article on the vanishing art of keeping right in the January/ February 2003 issue of *NMAF NEWS* was right on target. I have a sign paddle with flip cards (called a "Carmunicator") on which I made a sign "KEEP RIGHT." The reaction of offenders who refuse to yield the left lane and who I've passed on the right while displaying the sign, has almost universally been aggressive offense (e.g. the "finger") rather than contrition. I've often fantasized about the NMA selling a LED sign for rear windows with a KEEP RIGHT display among the set choice phrases.

Brian D. Graifman, Esq.
New York, NY

This is in regard to the Eric Peters, *The Vanishing Art of Moving Over* article in the last newsletter. Even with lane discipline signs ("Keep right except to pass," "Slower traffic keep right," "Left lane for passing only"), American drivers do not move over. They willfully block others. Why so? One reason is technical and the other (in my humble opinion) is "cultural," reflecting unspoken, shared values, assumptions and practices. Each feeds on the other.

The technical reason is that while

in reality there is a hierarchy of traffic laws which regulates the smooth and free flow of traffic, one law (posted limits) is over-emphasized throughout the driving chain. Drivers therefore feel that as long as they are doing the posted limit, they are following the most important law, which trumps all the others. So, they are not obliged to yield to "outlaws" who wish to pass. When limits are absurdly under-posted, the problem is aggravated considerably since traffic quickly piles up behind the lead car.

The cultural reason is that legal guilt and legalisms are more important than societal shame and common sense. A driver doing the posted limit but blocking several others feels legally correct. Although normally not an oaf, he feels no embarrassment, no shame, no cringes, even if he receives dirty looks, flashing beams, loud horns. Quite the contrary; he feels virtuous.

There is a misplaced and self-defeating individualism: although I block hundreds of others, I am exercising my constitutional rights with unrivalled freedom, at the head of the line, King-of-the-Road! Until, of course, I meet the next King of the Road 100 yards later and am blocked in turn.

In fact, on my last trip to Europe, I slipped into my American driving ways: avoiding left lanes expecting to be blocked, "undertaking" quickly through the right lanes, assuming that other drivers would be 10 mph over the limit. I was quickly disabused and then drove in the normal Euro way, which I had learned in the first place.

Nitin Kibe
McLean, VA 📍

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