



media release

Embargoed until 9 am, Wednesday 4 April 2007

Drivers urged to break their drive and arrive alive this Easter

The Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) and principal sponsor AAMI are urging Victorian drivers to break their drive by visiting one of 64 Driver Reviver sites located along Victoria's major tourist routes this Easter.

Staffed by VICSES volunteers and Lions Club members, Driver Reviver sites provide an opportunity for Victorian motorists to take a break in a safe area and receive free hot beverages (tea and coffee), biscuits and giveaway packs for the remainder of journey (including teabags, biscuits, a trivia CD and games).

According to VICSES, Easter break is the busiest time of year for volunteers at Driver Reviver sites: more than 1000 volunteers serve approximately 200,000 cups of tea or coffee.

Speaking at the launch of the 2007 Easter Driver Reviver program, VICSES CEO Ms Mary Barry urged motorists to take care.

"Fatigue is a major cause of road collisions – to help combat this risk, make use of our Driver Reviver sites to take a break and/or take the opportunity to change drivers," said Ms Barry.

"The volunteers don't ask for anything in return – just call in, take a break and arrive alive.

"According to research by our partner organisation AAMI, more than half of Victoria's drivers (53 per cent) have used a Driver Reviver site in the past – we'd welcome an increase in this proportion and would like to see even more drivers call in to a Driver Reviver site this Easter."

Asleep at the wheel

According to research by leading national insurer AAMI, more than one-quarter (27 per cent) of fatigued drivers in Victoria are unlikely to stop for a break this Easter – and the same proportion (27 per cent) of Victorian drivers admit to having momentarily fallen asleep at the wheel.

Further, one in eight Victorians (13 per cent) said fatigue/tiredness had contributed to a crash in which they were involved. Despite this, an equal proportion (13 per cent) of Victorians are willing to drive for four hours or more without taking a break.

Fatigue and its effects (falling asleep at the wheel) cause approximately one-quarter of deaths on Victorian roads (source: VicRoads), yet Victorian drivers continue to put themselves and other road users at risk.

"Driving while fatigued represents a serious risk for drivers and their passengers – drivers are advised to travel no more than 8-10 hours per day and take regular breaks out of their vehicle at least every two hours," said Ms Barry.

"As one of Australia's largest road accident rescue services, our volunteers regularly witness first-hand the tragic results of driver fatigue.

"Fatigue-related crashes tend to be more severe than others, due to drivers' delayed reaction times and failure to take action to avoid a crash – as drivers, it's important to remember we are responsible not only for ourselves but also for our passengers and other road users."

Driven to distraction

According to new and previously unpublished research by AAMI, Victorian drivers face a range of distractions, which they need to manage.

More than half (55 per cent) admit that inattention has contributed to a crash in which they were involved.

“Many Victorian drivers are being driven to distraction by devices such as mobile phones and car stereos – not to mention their passengers,” said Anthony Durakovic, AAMI General Manager, Southern Region.

“Four in ten Victorians (38 per cent) admit they have lost concentration while changing their car stereo while driving – and one in ten admit they play their car stereo so loud that even with their windows closed, others could hear it.

“One in six Victorians (17 per cent) admit they often use their mobile phone without a handsfree kit while driving – and almost twice as many (31 per cent) admit they have read/sent a text message while driving.

“Almost six in ten Victorian drivers (56 per cent) admit that having young children in the backseat is a real distraction – and most Victorian drivers (95 per cent) are concerned about the distraction that rowdy/intoxicated passengers cause to young drivers.

“Two-thirds of Victorian drivers (75 per cent) are concerned that the presence of electronic devices in cars (such as TVs and DVDs) will cause more crashes due to distraction caused to drivers.

“With more traffic on the road than usual around these peak holiday times, it’s important to take extra care on the roads – driving a motor vehicle requires constant attention and the slightest lack of concentration could have tragic consequences.”

Ten tips for avoiding fatigue

- 1) Avoid beginning a trip at the end of a day’s work
- 2) Ensure you have adequate sleep and are well-rested the night before you set out
- 3) Don’t drive at times when you would normally be asleep e.g. early hours of the morning
- 4) Schedule regular rest breaks outside the vehicle – at 15 minutes every two hours
- 5) Share the driving where possible
- 6) Never drink alcohol (not even small quantities) before or during long trips
- 7) Eat proper and well-balanced meals preferably at your normal mealtimes
- 8) Try to maintain a cool temperature inside the vehicle by opening windows to allow fresh air or using the vehicle’s airconditioning
- 9) Don’t drive while taking medication that may affect your driving – check the labels on your medication, and if in doubt, ask your doctor
- 10) Allow extra time and take a power nap if tired

Ten signs of fatigue

- 1) Constant yawning
- 2) Drifting in your lane of traffic
- 3) Sore or heavy eyes
- 4) Trouble keeping your head up
- 5) Delayed reactions
- 6) Loss of attention, daydreaming or ‘zoning out’
- 7) Difficulty remembering the last few kilometres
- 8) Variations in driving speed
- 9) Mood swings such as irritability or boredom
- 10) Objects or shadows on the roadside appear distorted

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