



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACTS: Dr. Ted Miller, miller@pire.org
410-381-1197 or 240-441-2890 (cell)

Matt Jeanneret, mjeanneret@artba.org
202-289-4434

Brian Turmail, turmailb@agc.org
703-837-5310

More than Half of Highway Fatalities Are Related to Deficient Roadway Conditions
New Study Shows More Forgiving Roads Would Save Lives and Cut Costs;
Health Experts & Transportation Leaders Urge Congressional Action

Conference call with researcher, ER physician and transportation experts:
Wed., July 1, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. EDT (9:00 – 10:00 a.m. PDT)
Dial-in number: 888-299-4099; Verbal passcode (provide to the operator): VT61602

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than half of U.S. highway fatalities are related to deficient roadway conditions – a substantially more lethal factor than drunk driving, speeding or non-use of safety belts – according to a landmark study released today. Ten roadway-related crashes occur every minute (5.3 million a year) and also contribute to 38 percent of non-fatal injuries, the report found.

In revealing that deficiencies in the roadway environment contributed to more than 22,000 fatalities and cost the nation more than \$217 billion annually, the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) concluded that making the roadway environment more protective and forgiving is essential to reducing highway fatalities and costs.

“If we put as much focus on improving road safety conditions as we do in urging people not to drink and drive, we’d save thousands of lives and billions of dollars every year,” principal study author Dr. Ted Miller said. Miller, an internationally-recognized safety economist with PIRE added, “Safer drivers and safer cars remain vitally important, but safer roadways are critical to saving lives, preventing injuries and reducing costs.”

Titled “*On a Crash Course: The Dangers and Health Costs of Deficient Roadways*,” the study found the \$217 billion cost of deficient roadway conditions dwarfs the costs of other safety factors, including: \$130 billion for alcohol, \$97 billion for speeding, or \$60 billion for failing to wear a safety belt. Indeed, the \$217 billion figure is more than three-and-one-half times the amount of money government at all levels is investing annually in roadway capital improvements – \$59 billion, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

The report concluded that roadway related crashes impose \$20 billion in medical costs; \$46 billion in productivity costs; \$52 billion in property damage and other resource costs; and \$99 billion in quality of life costs which measure the value of pain, suffering, and loss of enjoyment of life by those injured or killed in crashes and their families. The report also found that crashes linked to road conditions cost American businesses an

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estimated \$22 billion at a time when many firms are struggling. According to the report, crashes linked to road conditions cost taxpayers over \$12 billion every year.

“Recent concerns about swine flu pale in comparison to the number of crash victims I treat,” said Dr. Jared Goldberg, an emergency room physician in Alexandria, VA. “In medical terms, highway fatalities and injuries have reached epidemic proportions, and efforts to prevent further spread of this plague are essential. In the absence of a true vaccine to defend ourselves, fixing dangerous roads would help prevent traffic crashes from occurring in the first place.”

On a Crash Course identifies ways transportation officials can improve road conditions to save lives and reduce injuries. For example, immediate solutions for problem spots include: replacing non-forgiving poles with breakaway poles, using brighter and more durable pavement markings, adding rumble strips to shoulders, mounting more guardrails or safety barriers, and installing better signs with easier-to-read legends. The report also suggested more significant road improvements, including: adding or widening shoulders, improving roadway alignment, replacing or widening narrow bridges, reducing pavement edges and abrupt drop offs, and clearing more space adjacent to roadways.

“Although behavioral factors are involved in most crashes, avoiding those crashes through driver improvement requires reaching millions of individuals and getting them to sustain best safety practices,” continued Miller. “It is far more practical to make the roadway environment more forgiving and protective.”

The report also analyzed crash costs on a state-by-state basis. The 10 states with the:

- *Highest total cost from crashes involving deficient road conditions* are (alphabetically): Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas.
- *Highest road-related crash costs per million vehicle miles of travel* are: Alabama, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia.
- *Highest road-related crash costs per mile of road* are: California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and South Carolina.

PIRE is a leading independent transportation safety research organization. It has conducted research for a range of organizations, including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, National Safety Council and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Drawing upon the most recent available data from the U.S. Department of Transportation, PIRE employed analytic modeling methods to evaluate the causes and costs of U.S. motor vehicle crashes in preparing *On a Crash Course*.

PIRE conducted the study on behalf of the [Transportation Construction Coalition](http://www.transportationconstructioncoalition.org) (TCC), which hosts the full report, complete state-by-state data and other research findings at www.transportationconstructioncoalition.org. TCC members are calling on Congress to provide significant, dedicated funding for roadway safety improvements and to develop programs that encourage states to invest even more. The federal law that governs transportation funding will expire this fall, and congressional committees are now in the process of drafting successor legislation.

About the Authors

Ted R. Miller, Ph.D., Regional Science (economics); M. City Planning and M.S., Operations Research,
Principal Research Scientist

Dr. Miller is an internationally recognized safety economist, who has led more than 150 studies and authored more than 200 scholarly papers. He is a leading expert on injury incidence, costs and consequences, as well as substance abuse costs. His cost estimates are used by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Justice Department and several foreign governments. He has estimated benefit-cost ratios for more than 125 health and safety measures. He is a Fellow with the Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine and has received several national awards for his work.

Eduard Zaloshnja, Ph.D., Applied Economics
Research Scientist

Dr. Zaloshnja has a background in applied economics and econometrics, specializing in safety/substance abuse issues. At PIRE, he has estimated U.S. highway crash and bus and truck crash costs, as well as the costs of crashes to employers and the frequency and costs of traumatic brain injuries. He also has conducted effectiveness and benefit-cost analyses of diverse crash safety countermeasures including safety belts, child safety seats, booster seats, red light cameras, cattle guards, and streetlights. Currently, Dr Zaloshnja is investigating how often people become Medicaid recipients in order to pay their medical bills following catastrophic injuries.

About PIRE

The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) is a non-profit public health research organization. For more than 30 years, PIRE has studied transportation safety, doing groundbreaking work on issues related to driver behavior, including studies of safety belt use, driver distraction, hazard perception, aggressive driving, cell phone use, and fatigue. PIRE has been an international leader and made seminal contributions in research to understand and prevent impaired driving and reduce harm consequent to it. PIRE has conducted transportation safety research for, among others, the Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, National Safety Council, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). More at www.pire.org.

About TCC

The Transportation Construction Coalition (TCC) includes 28 national groups – representing contractors, engineers, manufacturers, suppliers and labor unions – with a collective interest in federal transportation policy and funding. More at www.transportationconstructioncoalition.org.

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