

SafetyCanada

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Where to Draw the Line on Lids



Montreal tour boat operator Jack Kowalski (far right), behind the wheel of his vehicle, wearing his "safety toque," a kayaking helmet under a knit hat.

Here at the Canada Safety Council, we are accustomed to encouraging people to wear helmets. Whether it's for recreational activities like hockey, quadding or tobogganing, or for workplace applications as personal protective equipment, the consensus is that helmets save lives. So, when asked by the media or members of the public, we never miss an opportunity to encourage helmet use.

But what about wearing a helmet in the car? This idea was brought to us by CSC member Jack Kowalski, who operates an adventure jet boat company based in Montreal. Kowalski is the self-styled safety advocate behind the website www.drivingwithoutdying.com, a pet project he has been working on since 2007. He asks: if helmets save lives, and head injuries are the primary cause of death in motor vehicle collisions, then why not wear a helmet in the car?

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President's Perspective

I read an interesting article recently about the idea of complacency and how it affects injury incidents in workplaces. The author, Terry L. Malthis, an American OHS practitioner, notes that when a precaution has become habitual, it's almost immune to assaults from complacency.

For example, he asks, when was the last time you forgot to buckle your seatbelt? For most of us, this simple precaution has become so routine, we do it without thinking, and we buckle up without fail. Forming new habits is effortful, but the beauty of a habit is that once established, it requires barely any work at all.

If the habit of wearing a seatbelt has been formed by a great majority of us, it's useful to remember that this is a shared achievement of education (several generations of public information campaigns), engineering (cars emitting annoying sounds that won't stop until your seatbelt is fastened), and enforcement (a costly ticket if you are apprehended by police). If we fail to take a simple measure like buckling up, it indicates the habit was never properly formed in the first place.

Obviously not every precaution is as simple as buckling up. Complex tasks with many steps benefit from a checklist, of the type followed by nuclear workers or airline pilots.

However in our day-to-day lives, there are a great many precautions that are already firmly established as habits -- looking both ways before crossing a street or looking up at the rear view mirror before hitting the brakes. And there are probably a great many other habits we could add to our safety repertoire. One that comes to mind is the habit to turn off cell phones or put them in the trunk before getting behind the wheel. What safety habits do you have in your daily life?

Safety, it's an attitude. It could equally be said that safety is a habit, one well worth cultivating.



Jack Smith, President



Where to Draw the Line on Lids, continued from page 1

If the idea strikes you as ludicrous, you're not alone. Perhaps it's because we have accepted the risks of driving as commonplace, the typical reaction to Kowalski's idea is dismissal, disbelief... and laughter.

After eight years wearing helmets in his own car and encouraging others to do the same, Kowalski has grown accustomed to this resistance. He points out it's the same reaction safety advocates encountered when they first proposed helmets in every other application.

Kowalski is possibly the world's most ardent advocate for helmets in the car, but he is quick to point out it wasn't his idea. Leather helmets for automobile racers first came into use in the early 1900s, albeit for the purpose of holding up goggles to keep dust out of drivers' eyes. Racing helmets have been used in the race car circuit since the 1950s. And in Australia, a helmet for ordinary motorists was even taken to market.

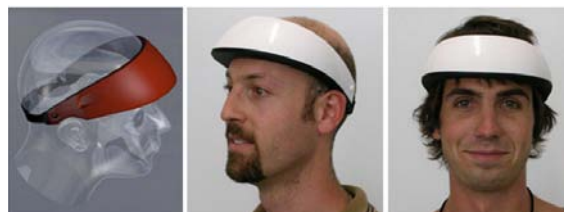
The "motoring helmet" was designed and sold by the Australian auto parts company Davies Craig in the 1980s. The accompanying manual anticipated the hurdles this product would encounter gaining general acceptance: "Wear it and don't feel self-conscious," the manual urges. "Driving even for the most proficient is dangerous...Ultimately, motoring helmets will be commonplace, but in the meantime, you will be a leader whilst those who may consider your good sense misplaced, will follow." Thirty years on, the Davies Craig Motoring Helmet appears condemned to the trash heap of failed product ideas. These days, the only people still talking about the motoring helmet, besides Kowalski, are cycling proponents who argue, tongue-in-cheek, that should cyclists be compelled by law to wear helmets, then so too should motorists.

In 2000, the Australian Federal Office for Road Safety funded a study into the development of an ultra-light head-

protection visor that the inventors reasoned might be more acceptable to motorists than a full motoring helmet. The project appears to have stalled out at prototype phase.

The impetus for the visor development was a 1997 study, also commissioned by the Australian government, looking into how interior padding beyond the usual dashboard airbag might reduce head injuries to the occupants. Academics in the fields of public health, biomechanics, and engineering examined 353 crashes involving 476 car occupants who sustained head, neck or facial injuries. They categorized those injuries and determined that the use of a softshell bike helmet would likely have reduced the severity of head injuries in 28 per cent of minor head injuries, 40 per cent of moderate head injuries and 26 per cent of severe head injuries. The researchers went on to conclude that padding the head with some kind of protective head gear is likely to "be considerably more effective than padding the car in improving the outcome of brain injury, including preventing the injury altogether in some cases."

But in calculating the estimated benefit of using protective head gear, the study authors considered it to be only a "slight possibility" that there could be an increase in injuries resulting from "added mass or reduced headspace." That assumption concerns CSC's General Manager of Programs, Raynald Marchand. "Most helmets are for applications where the body is unrestrained," Marchand observes.



This protective headband for motorists was developed by the University of Adelaide's Centre for Automotive Safety Research.

Continued on page 4

“Where the body is restrained, as with race car drivers, the additional weight of the helmet adds to the risk of injury in the event of a collision. That’s why racing helmets are anchored to the vehicle seat.”

But the way Kowalski sees it, the human body wasn’t designed to move at the speeds we now routinely travel, and our skulls are simply insufficient protection for the goods inside. “People don’t realize if you get hit in the exact right spot, you’re dead,” he says. “So you’ve got to put the odds in your favour. Drive

defensively, wear your seatbelt, and since we all have garages full of helmets, just pick one and wear it. Any helmet will do.”

Kowalski believes it will only be a matter of time before his idea gains traction. “It’s going to work,” he insists. “People are going to start doing it.”

What do you think? Would you wear a helmet in the car? Do you think it’s a bad idea? Share your thoughts by emailing media@safety-council.org, tweeting us @CanadaSafetyCSC, or by posting your comments to our Facebook page. ▲

CSC News

In February, we were pleased to welcome **Jackie Barbe** as our new Traffic Safety Program Coordinator. Anyone wondering how to pronounce her last name: the “e” on the end is silent. She takes responsibilities formerly contracted out to Ken Morgan, who has made a significant contribution to the motorcycle program for over 40 years. Jackie is a motorcycle enthusiast who has had a passion for all types of motorsports since childhood. If you have any inquiries about motorcycle training programs, please contact Jackie directly at 613-739-1535 ext. 227 or jackie.barbe@safety-council.org.



Jackie Barbe “Gearing Up” in her new role as Traffic Safety Program Coordinator.

March 14 to 20 was **National Farm Safety Week**. For this year’s campaign, we issued a series of three news releases on different aspects of all-terrain vehicle safety, including a tip sheet, an article specific to young riders of ATVs, and a profile story of a farm family who had lost a loved one to an ATV rollover. We owe a big thanks to the farmers whose lent their stories to this year’s campaign.



Also in March, our off-road section announced an exciting new partnership with Fresh Air Educators, a provider of outdoor education modules online. Students wishing to receive ATV certification can now access part of their training through an interactive Fresh Air Educators program. Students completing the online course will still have to complete the hands-on portion of the training in person with a CSC instructor who recognizes this certificate. Off-road instructors, please contact us if you are interested in participating in this program.

Do you know a young person striving to make the world a safer place? Encourage them to apply for the **Sarah Beth Therien Memorial Scholarship**, a one-time award of \$2,000 recognizing safety leaders among Canada's youth. The competition period opened January 31, and we will be accepting applications until June 15. For more details, visit our website.

Looking Ahead

We will be holding our **Annual General Meeting** April 16, 9 a.m. in the board room of at our office, 1020 Thomas Spratt Place in Ottawa. All members are invited to attend.

National Summer Safety Week is right around the corner May 1 – 7. This year we will be focussing on water safety and the importance of wearing a lifejacket. Following closely behind is **National Road Safety Week** May 12 – 18, when we will be discussing vulnerable road users.

Safety Calendar

(These events are not affiliated or organized by the Canada Safety Council)

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| April 20-21 | Western Conference on Safety , a Workplace Occupational Health and Safety Conference, Vancouver |
| April 27-30 | International Conference on Urban Traffic Safety , Edmonton |
| April 28-29 | Partners in Prevention Health & Safety Conference , Mississauga. |
| May 5-7 | Petroleum Safety Conference , Banff |
| May 11-17 | National Police Week , Canada |
| May 24-25 | International Conference and Exhibition on Occupational Health & Safety , Toronto |
| May 27-31 | Canadian Association of Road Safety Professionals Conference , Ottawa |

Safety Training Online

Want to go back to school without leaving home?
Visit www.canadasafetycouncil.org/training
to sign up for online safety training! Courses include OH&S topics,
defensive driving, babysitters training, and home alone safety.

Popular on Social Media

CanadaSafetyCouncil
@CanadaSafetyCSC

Hands-free doesn't free up your brain, so hands-free is still **#DistractedDriving**.
#JustDrive ow.ly/JDICb

Figure 4. Where drivers not using a hands-free cell phone looked. Source: Transport Canada
Figure 5. Where drivers using a hands-free cell phone looked. Source: Transport Canada

RETWEETS: 41 FAVORITES: 16

Canada Safety Council shared Ohio State Highway Patrol's video.

Posted by Lynn Lau [?] · February 26 at 12:18pm · Edited ·

It would be the understatement of the year to say this 26-year-old was "lucky" to have walked away after being ejected from his vehicle during a highway mishap captured by a police dash cam. Ohio police just released this clip from January to remind motorists 1) to adjust driving to the conditions and 2) to please buckle up.

497,721 Views

Ohio State Highway Patrol

Crashes like this one from January serve as reminders to be careful when driving in winter conditions. Slow down, pay attention, leave distance between yourself and other vehicles and always wear your safety belt. Also, remember to #moveover for emergency vehicles!

312 people reached

Boost Post

Canada Safety Council

Posted by Lynn Lau [?] · March 9 at 8:31am · Edited ·

Useful illustration of three types of driver distractions: visual, manual and cognitive. Clipping from the Centres for Disease Control Vital Signs article on truckers safety: <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/truck-safety/>

TYPES OF DISTRACTIONS

VISUAL: Taking your eyes off the road
Examples: Reading, or sending a text message, rubbernecking in traffic, or looking at a sign.

MANUAL: Taking your hands off the wheel
Examples: Taking on a handheld cell phone, connecting to music, or eating.

COGNITIVE: Taking your mind off driving
Examples: Talking to your dispatcher, thinking about your next appointment, or arguing with a passenger.

TEXT MESSAGING while driving is especially dangerous; it combines all three types of distractions.

SOURCE: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2013.

Do you have a safety story, tip or pet-peeve to share?
Email media@safety-council.org, tweet us @CanadaSafetyCSC or send us a post or a message on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/canada.safety>.

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter: @CanadaSafetyCSC

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