

AAMVA Regional News

July 20, 2012

Tidbits

- Region IV conference presentations have been posted to the AAMVA website. Find them by [clicking here](#).
- You are no doubt aware of the DMV Imitator websites. Some of these sites apparently download malware to the customer's PC. FTC provided a link to an article that contains tips on preventing and getting rid of malware: <http://onguardonline.gov/malware>. DMVs should feel free to link to it, pull tips from it, or make it their own as they reach out to consumers. Anyone with a complaint about these sites can register a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint or by calling 877-FTC-HELP. The complaints go into the [Consumer Sentinel Network](#), a secure online database and investigative tool used by hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

Region I News

Maryland MVA Offers Self-Service Driver's License Renewals Online or at Kiosks

Maryland residents in their 20s or 30s may now be eligible to renew driver's licenses online or at self-service kiosks. The MVA said Monday it is implementing the first of two phases for a new process to streamline driver's license renewals. The new service uses the most recent photograph of the driver and will require an office visit on the next renewal to update the image. The first phase is for drivers aged 21 to 39 because drivers under 40 are exempt from the state's vision screening requirement. The second phase will accommodate the vision test for driver's license holders who are 40 or older. It will be implemented later. Renewal licenses are initially valid for five years. They will eventually be lengthened for up to eight years. [Read the full story in the Washington Post.](#)

RMV Employee Accused of Creating At Least 15 Fake Driver's Licenses *(Massachusetts)*

A Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles employee has been charged with creating at least 15 fake driver's licenses for people who used other people's Puerto Rican documents. Vanessa Peguero was charged in U.S. District Court in Boston on Wednesday with producing a false identification document. She was released on \$10,000 bail. Prosecutors say she was recruited by a man who flirted with her in the Registry's Leominster branch and agreed to create the fake license for a fee of \$200 each. She allegedly told authorities that she never met the people for whom she made the licenses. If convicted, she faces a maximum of 15 years in federal prison. The RMV cooperated with authorities in the investigation. [Read the full story at CBS Boston.](#)

Teen Drivers Responsible For 36% of South Jersey Fatal Accidents in 2012, So Far

According to the South Jersey Traffic Safety Alliance, teen drivers are responsible for 36% of fatal crashes in South Jersey for the first six months of 2012. Officials say there have been 33 motor vehicle fatalities in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem Counties. The region's 33 fatalities occurred in 28 motor vehicle crashes, accounting for 12% of the state's 269 motor vehicle fatalities. [Read the full story at NBC 40.](#)

New Jersey Law Toughens Penalties for Fatal Distracted Driving

Drivers who kill someone while using a handheld cell phone can now be charged with vehicular homicide under a measure signed into law Wednesday. The law allows prosecutors to charge distracted drivers with vehicular homicide if they kill someone with an automobile. The legislation is called the "Kulesh, Kubert and Bolis Law" in

recognition of the victims of three distracted-driving crashes in New Jersey. The new law does not change the penalties for reckless driving, but it adds illegal cellphone use – texting or talking on a phone that is not hands-free – to the list of factors that can indicate reckless driving. If a reckless driver kills someone, prosecutors can bring vehicular homicide charges. That crime is punishable by imprisonment of five to 10 years, a fine of up to \$150,000, or both. Similarly, a reckless driver who injures someone can be brought up on assault by automobile charges. Assault by auto that results in serious injury is punishable by up to 18 months imprisonment, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. [Read the full story in NorthJersey.com.](#)

Queens Auto Shop Manager Charged With Running Illegal “Inspection Sticker Mill” And Falsifying Emissions Tests *(New York)*

The manager of a Jamaica, Queens, auto shop has been charged with using “dummy” vehicles to illegally issue state-mandated inspection stickers for approximately 30 vehicles – which, in fact, had never been inspected. The defendant, Easton R. McEwan, 46, has been charged with 30 counts of third-degree computer tampering, illegal possession of a vehicle ID number, 30 counts of first-degree offering a false instrument for filing, 30 counts of second-degree falsifying business records, and 30 counts of issuing an inspection sticker without a proper inspection. The defendant was released without bail and ordered to return to court on July 25, 2012. If convicted, the defendant faces up to four years in prison. According to the charges, between November 29, 2011 and February 6, 2012, inside of Eastmac Auto Specialist, the defendant, who is the manager of the shop, allegedly used “dummy” vehicles to illegally issue inspection stickers which were then placed on vehicles which were never, in fact, inspected. The defendant was licensed by the New York DMV to perform safety and emissions inspections as required by New York State law. In order to conduct the inspections the a VIN into an inspection machine while at the same time the computer on the inspection machine draws the VIN from the vehicle to which it is attached. The investigation began when DMV computers showed that the VINs were mismatched, i.e., that the vehicle plugged into the inspection machine in fact had a different VIN than that which was punched in by the inspector. [Read the Queens County DA's press release.](#)

Bill Exempts Newer Vehicles from Emissions Test *(Pennsylvania)*

Automobile owners may get a break. Sen. Elder Vogel says it's time to modify Pennsylvania's auto emissions inspection requirement and is introducing a bill that excludes all cars, 10 years or newer. Right now, car owners in Allegheny, Beaver, Washington and Westmoreland counties must get an annual auto emissions inspection on top of an auto safety inspection, while those in Armstrong, Butler, Greene, Fayette, and Lawrence do not. That extra sticker costs \$30 to \$40 a year. Vogel says with computerized engines, only a quarter of one percent of newer cars fail and the inspection program costs car owners \$250 million a year. Vogel's bill may pass the state Senate this fall, but there is no action planned at all in the state House of Representatives. That means the bill will have to start all over again next January. [Read the full story at CBS Local.](#)

Region II News

Online Teen Driver Course Now Being Offered in Texas as an Alternative to Traditional Classroom Courses

Texas teens and others who need their driver licenses can now take a complete Texas drivers ed course online. B Line Traffic Schools' online teen driver course meets all state requirements for obtaining a drivers license without the hassle of attending a physical classroom. The interactive and interesting format allows people to work at their own speed to complete the requirements for obtaining a drivers license. For anyone who has a hard time sitting in a classroom for hours at a time, the online drivers ed course can be a helpful alternative when it comes to fulfilling the requirements for a Texas drivers license. B Line Traffic Schools has divided the course into 8 easy-to-follow

units that use multiple media types in an interactive format to help maintain the student's attention while imparting the necessary information. Short, multiple-choice quizzes are given at the end of each unit so the student can see how well the information was learned. The student is allowed to move on to the next unit once one unit has been passed. The teen driver course has a final exam that must be passed with a minimum 80% grade, but the final may be taken as many times as it takes to pass it. Once the course has been completed, the student will receive a certificate of completion by mail. [Read the full story in the Houston Chronicle.](#)

Suspended Drivers: Pay Driver License Reinstatement Fees Online (Texas)

An online service offered by Texas.gov, in partnership with Texas DPS, is helping suspended drivers get back behind the wheel with less hassle. Texas.gov/LicenseEligibility lets drivers view instructions for reinstating a license, pay reinstatement fees, and track driving eligibility status. Each year, DPS processes an average of 150,000 driver license reinstatements. Before the Driver License Eligibility system was launched, DPS could only receive payments via mail and suspended drivers could only track their driving status by phone. Since the online service's launch one year ago, more than 100,000 suspended drivers have paid their reinstatement fees online instead of mailing payment to DPS headquarters, and more than 3,500 people log in every day to view their reinstatement requirements and check their driving eligibility status. All suspended Texas drivers, including commercial driver license holders, are eligible to use the online Driver License Eligibility system. [Read the full story at Market Watch.](#)

Texas Going Back to 'Classic' License Plates

The state is bringing back a classic look on the roads. Soon, you'll be able to get the old style black and white license plates for your car. The 'classic' plate is the standard white plate, with black lettering. It's a general issue, so you can request it. The black and white plate will display the same information as the standard color plates, but before the new plates go into circulation, county tax offices need to get rid of all their other inventory first. The new plates also come with a security feature. Two new high-visibility security threads on the new classic plates join existing holograms, making it easier for officers to spot legitimate plates. More information on license plates, including The Texas Classic, is available at www.TxDmv.gov. [Read the full story at KTRK.](#)

Region III News

New License Plates Promote "Sharing the Road" for Bicycles, Cars (Illinois)

A new specialty license plate promoting the need for motorists and bicyclists to "Share the Road" has debuted on Illinois streets. The turquoise plate has the silhouette of a bicyclist along with a simulated yellow caution "Share the Road" street sign. The text: "Same Rights, Same Rules" runs along the bottom of the plate. More than 1,300 pairs of the specialty plates have already been delivered and are on cars throughout the state. Personalized and specialty plates are currently in production with some already arriving on cars as well. Funds generated will be used for cyclist and motorist education efforts, such as children and adult bike safety information, driver's education class materials, an online certification website, and police resources. Random, personalized and vanity plates can now be ordered through the Secretary of State's office. The League receives \$17 of the first year's incremental cost of \$51 for random plates; and, \$20 of the \$22 fee each year the plate is renewed. [Read the full story at PR.com.](#)

DUI Fatalities Drop Sharply in Wake of Recent Law (Kansas)

When lawmakers passed legislation in 2011 requiring an ignition interlock for those convicted of their first drunken driving offense, one of the main goals was cutting down on alcohol-related traffic fatalities. After a year, it appears the law is working. Between July 1, 2011 — when the state's new DUI ignition interlock law went into effect — and

June 30, 2012, the state recorded 59 alcohol-related traffic fatalities, compared with 125 and 137, respectively, for the previous two years. Kansas had lagged behind the country in reducing alcohol-related fatalities, seeing increases in recent years as numbers dropped across the country. Alcohol-related traffic fatalities averaged 116 a year between 2000 and 2010 in the state. Kansas drivers with a DUI conviction now must install an ignition interlock — which requires drivers to blow into a device to show their blood-alcohol level is under .04, half the legal limit — before their vehicle will start. Under the new law, first-time DUI offenders must use an ignition interlock for a year; drivers with multiple DUI convictions must use it longer. [Read the full story at LJWorld.com.](#)

Driving Drunk to Escape Attack Will Cost Driver License (Minnesota)

Jennifer Axelberg covered in the front seat of her locked vehicle as her drunken husband jumped onto the hood and punched the windshield so hard the glass spidered across the driver's side. Jennifer, also drunk, then started the car and drove toward the safety of the tavern where they'd been drinking earlier. He was arrested on suspicion of domestic assault and disorderly conduct -- and she was arrested on suspicion of drunken driving. Now a Kanabec County judge has ruled that escaping domestic violence is no defense against having your license revoked for drunken driving, denying the 38-year-old woman's challenge to the revocation of her driver's license under Minnesota's implied-consent law. In his ruling, District Judge Stoney Hiljus wrote that "the episode of domestic violence here is outweighed by the potential hazards [Axelberg] created for the public when she drove her vehicle while intoxicated." He concluded that a criminal-based "necessity defense" can't be used in a civil matter of public safety. [Read the full story in the Star Tribune.](#)

Investigators: 10,000 Minnesota Drivers Licenses Canceled in Possible Fraud

For an identity thief, a legitimate, valid Minnesota driver's license under an assumed name is the Holy Grail. Get one of these you have it made: credit card and mortgage fraud. Get stopped by a cop, hop on an airplane, no problem. And while we may think a driver's license is the gold standard for identity, come to find out there are tens of thousands of very real DLs for very fake people. Every four years in Minnesota, driver licenses are renewed. The Minnesota Department of Vehicle Services is seriously concerned about people trying to game the system. So four years ago DVS got a federal grant to use facial recognition software, electronically comparing the facial features in photos from driver's licenses and state IDs. Out of 11 million photos in the vehicle services database, facial recognition found nearly 1.3 million matches. Vehicle services then began going through those records by hand, looking at the pictures side by side. They identified about 23,000 records that they think are a good chance of being fraud; 23,705 cases of possible fraud to be exact. Of these, about 10,000 have been canceled. Beyond that, not much else has been done. 5,500 cases have been referred to an agency who can take any action necessary. Vehicle services is still waiting to cancel 13,000 more drivers licenses. But even if they're eventually prosecuted, the penalty for using a fake name to get a real drivers license is only a gross misdemeanor. A gross misdemeanor, for a crime that even under the most conservative estimates, is costing the state millions. The Department of Vehicle Services says this is still very much a moving target. The state is working on acquiring this facial recognition software so they can continue to screen driver's licenses. More arrests are expected. [Read the full story at KMSP.](#)

Ohio Inmates Can Earn Commercial Driver's License

The Ohio prisons agency is entering into a partnership to allow inmates who are fathers to earn a commercial driver's license while behind bars. The program is open to inmates who qualify for a societal re-entry program and take training through The RIDGE Project, a faith-based organization that works with imprisoned fathers and their families. The RIDGE Project is paying for the driving portion of the training with \$4 million in federal grants. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction will provide four to six weeks of classroom training and PI&I

Motor Express will teach three weeks of driving. The program will start soon and is expected to graduate five inmates a month from Richland and Pickaway correctional institutions. [Read the full story at Ohio.com.](#)

Vehicle Titles will be Sent to Lien Holders Starting July 30, 2012; Vehicle Owners will Receive Titles When a Loan is Paid Off *(Wisconsin)*

Wisconsin soon joins 38 states in becoming a title-to-lien holder state. This means that any title with a lien listed on or after July 30, 2012 will be sent to the lien holder rather than the owner. Lien holders may choose to receive either paper or electronic titles. The advantage to electronic delivery is that Wisconsin does not issue a paper title to the lender or owner of the vehicle until the lien is satisfied. This process eliminates most of the paper handling involved in vehicle titling and results in greater convenience and lower costs. These changes implement provisions included in the 2011-2013 state budget passed by the legislature last year. Owners of vehicles with liens purchased on or after July 30, 2012 will receive a Confirmation of Ownership and will receive the actual title when all liens are paid off. [Read the DMV press release.](#)

Region IV News

All Government Services Affected By Shaw Court Fire Now Fully Restored *(Alberta)*

Motor vehicle registry and land titles services are now fully restored and available to Albertans following the disruption caused by a fire in Calgary's Shaw Court Centre. Government put in place several temporary provisions during the outage to lessen the impact on Albertans. Drivers with licences that expired on or after July 1, 2012 were granted an extension. This extension remains in place until July 31, 2012 to allow time for Albertans to come in to a registry agent and renew their driver's licences. Albertans who bought a vehicle and needed a licence plate were allowed to use In-transit Permits during the interim. These special 14 day permits will no longer be issued now that the motor vehicle system is operational but remain valid until the expiry date on the permit. The July 11 fire caused the outage of a data centre supporting several provincial government services and applications. Most services were restored by July 13, but the motor vehicle registry and land titles data required more time to restore and test to ensure the integrated systems were stable and functioning properly. Now that all the systems are restored, government will take the time to internally assess what happened and make improvements if necessary. [Read the Alberta press release.](#)

Hands-Free Texting While Driving Legalized In California

Among the 18 bills signed into law Friday by Governor Brown was one legalizing the use of voice-operated, hands-free texting and emailing while operating a motor vehicle. Assembly Bill 1536 will become law on January 1, 2013. It will allow drivers to "dictate, send or listen to text-based communications as long as they do so using technology specifically designed to allow voice-operated and hands-free operation." Brown's approval of the law comes three years after California banned using electronic wireless communications devices to write, read, or send text-based communications while operating a car, truck, or other motor vehicle. The new regulation will revise section 23123.5 of the California Vehicle Code to contain language allowing the use of voice-operated, hands-free systems to "dictate, send, or listen to a text-based communication" while driving. The authors of the bill "purposely left the language open to apply to other devices, and although voice-powered smartphone apps like Siri weren't being thought of specifically, they do fit within the bill's language. In order to be in compliance with the law, the phone must be synced to a Bluetooth earpiece, dashboard app, or other device before starting the car. With the device and the phone operational, the driver will need to say "text" followed by the name of the recipient, the message, and then the word "send." When receiving texts, the earpiece or speaker should automatically read the content of the message to the driver. [Read the full story at KTRK.](#)

Bay Area Drivers Could Pay to Drive Each Mile under Tax Proposal (California)

Imagine being taxed a dollar for driving to the store. Commute to work? That'll be a few bucks more. The Bay Area is considering a long-range plan to become the first place in the nation to tax drivers for every mile they travel, with an average bill of up to \$1,300 per year. The proposal is a long way from becoming reality. But under the scenario, drivers would likely have to install GPS-like trackers on their cars to tally travel in the nine-county Bay Area, from freeways to neighborhood streets, with only low-income people exempted. Under the early proposal, the VMT tax could cost up to a dime per mile, or the cost may peak during rush hour and bottom out, perhaps to less than a penny per mile, when the roads are mostly empty. The VMT study is part of the long-term transportation and housing effort called Plan Bay Area, which also includes strategies like raising the Bay Bridge rush-hour toll from \$6 to \$8 and reducing the size of parking lots. The results are expected in December before the two agencies vote in April. The VMT tax could raise up to \$15 million daily, as Bay Area drivers combine to travel about 150 million miles each weekday. [Read the full story in Mercury News.](#)

Number of Colorado DUIs Dropped the Past Three Years

Despite recent high-profile cases involving people killed by alleged drunken drivers, DUI numbers have declined statewide the past three years. Since 2009, filings for driving under the influence and driving while ability impaired have dropped by 5,462 cases, or 17.4%, to 26,010 cases. DUI is defined by a blood-alcohol level of 0.08% or higher. DWAI is defined as having a BAC of 0.05% to 0.07%. Alcohol-related traffic fatalities declined steadily from 2001 to 2010. Prosecutors credit aggressive enforcement, increased penalties and more people making good decisions. In 2008, state law changed, and now a first-time DUI/DWAI offense carries a minimum of two days to a week in jail. Multiple offenses range from a minimum of 10 to 60 days behind bars. Fines were also increased. DUI fines for first offenses reach up to \$1,000. DWAI fines range between \$200 and \$500. A second DUI or DWAI extends the fine range to \$1,500. The law also allows a DUI offender's license to be suspended for nine months, and up to two years if the person's BAC is greater than 0.17%. Since the 2008-09 fiscal year, state courts, minus Denver County, have collected more than \$8.4 million in fines for DUI offenses alone. Denver County has collected \$673,538 since 2008. The loss of driving privileges and the requirement of the Interlock Breathalyzer device are other strong deterrents against drunken driving. Colorado currently has between 19,000 and 20,000 vehicles with Interlocks installed. [Read the full story in the Denver Post.](#)

Legislator Renews Repeal Push of Nevada's Helmet Law (Nevada)

As he has done in every Legislature since 1997, Sen. Don Gustavson intends to introduce a bill next year to repeal Nevada's 40-year-old law requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets. Gustavson said he believes the bill will pass this time because of the national move to give riders the "freedom of choice" to decide whether to wear a helmet. Thirty-one states have repealed helmet laws. He is introducing the same bill he sought to pass in 2011. The bill would require all riders and passengers under age 21 to wear helmets. Motorcyclists 21 and older could ride without helmets, as long as they have at least one year of experience and have passed an approved motorcycle safety course. Passengers 21 and older also could ride without helmets. But opponents said that repealing the helmet law only would cause more motorcyclists to die and lead to more serious injuries to those who survive. State and local governments ultimately would have to pay a large share of the hospital costs for those who suffer traumatic injuries. The statistics support that view. The four Nevada trauma centers admitted 5,559 injured motorcyclists or passengers between 2005 and 2010. Ninety percent of them were wearing helmets, and their average hospital charges were \$68,734. The 10% not wearing helmets had average charges of \$84,004. In 2008 and 2009, Clark County-run UMC ate \$45 million of the cost of treating injured motorcyclists. Nineteen motorcyclists were killed in Nevada in the first half of 2012. In recent years, 40 to 57 motorcyclists have been killed a year. There are 129,000 registered motorcyclists in the state. Only 142 are under the age of 21. [Read the full story in the Las Vegas Review Journal.](#)

ODOT Finds Quarter of Truck Drivers Fatigued (Oregon)

About a quarter of the commercial truck drivers who were checked last week in Oregon had been behind the wheel too long without rest. The Oregon DOT put the 256 drivers out of service because of the violations. [Read the full story in the Argus Observer.](#)

Other News of Interest

Law Enforcement Fatalities Decrease 44% in the First Half of 2012, Reaching a 52-Year Low

In a reversal of recent trends and positive news for the law enforcement community, law enforcement fatalities declined significantly nationwide during the first half of 2012, reaching a 52-year low. Fifty-three law enforcement officers died in the line of duty during the first six months of this year, according to preliminary figures released today by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF), in conjunction with the Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.). This represents a 44% decrease over the 94 officers who lost their lives during the same time last year. Officer fatalities decreased across all circumstances yet peace officer ambushes remain the leading circumstance of fatal shootings. [Read the full story at PRNewswire.com.](#)

Did you know . . .

- *There are more than 3,500 species of mosquitoes. About 175 of them are found in the United States. West Virginia has the fewest species of mosquitoes. There are 26 in the mountainous state, while Texas has the most with 85. Florida is a close second with 80 identified species.*
- *The average mosquito lifespan is less than two months. Males have the shortest lives, usually 10 days or less, and females can live about six to eight weeks, under ideal conditions. The females lay eggs about every three days during that time. Females of species that hibernate may live up to six months.*
- *Mosquitoes can smell human breath. They have receptors on their antennae that detect the carbon dioxide released when we exhale. Those plumes of CO2 rise into the air, acting as trails that the mosquitoes follow to find the source.*
- *Sweat helps mosquitoes choose their victims. Our skin produces more than 340 chemical odors, and some of them smell like dinner to mosquitoes. They are fond of octenol, a chemical released in sweat, as well as cholesterol, folic acid, certain bacteria, skin lotions, and perfume.*
- *Body heat marks the target. Mosquitoes use heat sensors around their mouthparts to detect the warmth of your body – actually, the blood inside it – then land on you and locate the best capillaries for tapping.*