

AAMVA Regional News

October 26, 2012

Tidbits

- We're sad to report that Kathy Starnes has passed away. Kathy was a long time employee of the New York Department of Motor Vehicles and was very involved in the CDL / CDLIS programs. Our condolences to her friends and family in New York.
- Motorcyclist deaths in California have risen 20% from 2010 to 2011. The increase reverses a two-year decline in fatal motorcycle accidents, and CHP is asking the public to be extra vigilant of motorcycles on the road to prevent future tragedies.

Region I News

DMV Announces New Website Translation into 65 Languages (*Connecticut*)

DMV has started providing a translation of its more than 400 web pages into 65 different languages for greater customer convenience and understanding of DMV policies and state laws. The new offering ranges from the more common languages of Spanish, French and Vietnamese to the less-often-used Gujarati, Tamil and Catalan. The DMV website last year had more than 26 million page views of its information. Over 5.3 million visitors went to the site, including nearly one million from a mobile phone or tablet. The agency is using Google Translate online service, which immediately converts the web pages into the language a customer chooses from a drop-down menu. The service does not translate forms or other documents that are separate files to be downloaded from the site. DMV provides a disclaimer on the site that the translation may provide differences in some understandings of a language depending on dialect and translation. The agency gives a link to contact DMV for assistance in those instances. [Read the DMV press release.](#)

D.C. Proposes Tough New Regulations on Motor Scooters

A D.C. Council bill debated this week would issue sweeping new rules on District residents who ride mopeds and motor scooters, requiring them to buy insurance, register with the DMV and-in some cases-obtain motorcycle licenses. The bill was requested earlier this month by Mayor Vince Gray in an attempt to streamline current vehicle classifications. The existing system easily convolutes motor scooters and motorcycles, with owners of larger scooters sometimes enduring frequent run-ins with the police for not obeying motorcycle rules. The proposed rules would mandate that all scooter riders wear helmets and goggles, prohibit all scooters from being parked on the sidewalk and require all vehicles to be registered with the District. Furthermore, owners of scooters capable of going faster than 25 miles per hour would be required to pass the DMV's motorcycle examination. Some riders, however, say D.C.'s traffic patterns make it foolish to ride a scooter that goes slower than 25 miles per hour. "It's too dangerous. Vehicles with that engine cannot get out of the way of traffic," one rider told the Examiner. In their current form, the new scooter regulations would put D.C. on par with Maryland, which recently tightened its regulations to require that motor scooters of all sizes and speeds be registered, titled and insured. [Read the full story in DCist.com.](#)

D.C. Could Pass Driverless Car Bill by End of Year

The Washington, D.C., city council is mulling a bill that would soon allow autonomous, driverless cars to operate on district roadways. The council held its first public meeting Tuesday on the "Autonomous Vehicle Act of 2012,"

which would require the district DMV to create an autonomous vehicle designation and would allow driverless cars to operate in the district. The move comes after Google demonstrated its driverless car to district council members earlier this year. Representatives from Daimler and Volvo testified Tuesday and said they are also developing cars that can automatically brake if a pedestrian is in the way, with the goal of developing fully autonomous cars in the near future. It is possible that the bill will be passed before the end of the year and would presumably allow driverless cars to operate as soon as Mayor Vincent Gray establishes "procedures and fees for the registration, titling, and issuance of permits to operate vehicles." D.C. roads, and their notoriously bad drivers, might represent a unique challenge for autonomous cars. But council members were sufficiently impressed with Google's demonstration that they decided to move forward with legislation. [Read the full story at USnews.com](#)

Guilty Plea in Fake License Scam (Massachusetts)

A Leominster woman who worked at the Registry of Motor Vehicles pleaded guilty Wednesday in U.S. District Court to producing false driver's licenses. Vanessa Peguero, 27, allegedly helped people who produced the legitimate Puerto Rican driver's licenses of other people to obtain Massachusetts drivers licenses to conceal their identity. She admitted to agreeing to receive \$200 per license from a man who sent people to her work station, while investigators found that two people in New York were charging \$4,000 per license, including one traced back to Ms. Peguero. Ms. Peguero allegedly issued driver's licenses to at least 15 people, including an "aggravated felon" who had previously been deported from the United States. She illegally issued the driver's licenses from about February 2010 through June 2012, the U.S. Attorney's office charged. Ms. Peguero began working for the registry in 2007. The case was jointly investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the state police. The agency said Ms. Peguero issued state driver's licenses to people who presented legitimate Puerto Rican identification documents of people other than themselves. The agency said this was done so the applicants could get driver's licenses that would conceal their true identities. One person who had obtained fraudulent licenses from Ms. Peguero was a "previously deported aggravated felon" who had come back into the country, according to the affidavit. He was arrested Dec. 31 at JFK Airport in New York. Ms. Peguero told investigators she had been approached about two years ago by a man named "Leo" who was doing a transaction at her counter in the Leominster office and flirted with her and asked for her phone number. She said he later admitted to her that he had fraudulently obtained the Puerto Rican documents he had used to obtain a license. He asked her if she would be willing to make similar false transactions for a payment of \$200 each, and she agreed. Sentencing is set for Jan. 22. She faces up to 15 years in prison, to be followed by up to three years of supervised release and up to a \$250,000 fine. [Read the full story at Telegram.com.](#)

Teen Driving Decal Law Promotes Safety, According To New Study (New Jersey)

A new study finds Jersey's law requiring young teen drivers to display a decal on their vehicle is helping to promote safety. The study, conducted by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, finds that after Kyleigh's Law went into effect in May of 2010, there was a nine percent reduction in the crash rate for drivers with probationary licenses during the following year. The study found the law prevented 1,624 drivers from getting into a crash. Because of the law, teen drivers are aware that there are other people checking up on them, and at the same time teen drivers are also aware- very acutely because it's now part of the protocol for getting your license- the limitations that are placed on them. Despite fears the decals could attract predators, New Jersey is having the same experience as jurisdictions around the world have had with this law – no demonstrable reported incidences of anyone using a probationary driver decal for anything other than the purpose it was intended. [Read the full story at NJ1015.com.](#)

Prison Inmates Man Calls for DMV (New York)

There is a chance you could end up talking to an inmate, when you call the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles. The NYS Department of Correctional Services operates two DMV call centers, at the medium security Greene Correctional Facility for men, and the maximum security Bedford Hills prison for women. Together, 85 inmates handle about one million calls a year. "I'm not aware of any incident that would cause any concern for the DMV customers," said Peter Cutler, a correctional services spokesperson, who says inmates have been taking calls from DMV customers as far back as 1988. Inmates assigned to the call centers undergo nearly 500 hours of training prior to being able to take calls. Each is supplied with a profile book containing all the information necessary to answer general assistance questions, such as DMV office hours and locations, identification requirements, the emissions program, and what customers will need and what they should expect before conducting a DMV transaction. Inmates transfer any questions about detailed customer information to a civilian DMV employee. Participating offenders do not have access to DMV computers and are not able to access any customer data. Offenders convicted of a telephone-related crime or credit card or computer fraud are not eligible to work at the center, and that calls are monitored at random, to ensure that inmates are not asking motorists questions they should not, particularly regarding personal information. Call center jobs are among the most coveted by inmates in the prisons that house the centers. Not only is it appealing for a prisoner to be able to speak with someone outside of the walls and barbed wire that contain them (albeit under very restricted circumstances), but the jobs provide skills which might help them find employment opportunities at the conclusion of their sentences. As the inmates are paid between 46-cents and \$1.14 per hour, the state claims it is saving up to \$3-million a year in DMV salaries. [Read the full story at WGRZ.com.](#)

New York DMV Allows Vehicle Owners to Print 10-Day Registration

Forget to renew your vehicle registration on time? The DMV now allows drivers to print a temporary 10-day registration from its website after customers renew. Although many people renew on time, some wait too long or simply forget and run the risk of having their current registration sticker expire before they can receive the new one in the mail. Customers can still renew through the mail, at a DMV office or online at www.dmv.ny.gov. After the temporary tag is printed, drivers must place it on the driver's-side dashboard under the expired sticker. For motorcycles or trailers, the driver must carry the temporary tag. [Read the full story in the Staten Island Advance.](#)

Region II News

Florida Slams Brakes on License Plate Changes

Florida hit the brakes Tuesday and delayed a redesign of its license plates, sparing Gov. Scott a clash with county tax collectors. Scott's highway safety chief, Julie Jones, wants the state to switch from a plate with raised letters to a flat tag, saying the current tag is hard to read by cameras at toll booths and red-light intersections. She came to the Cabinet meeting prepared to ask for \$24 million next year to get the project moving. Jones proposed more outsourcing by hiring a private vendor to distribute tags to motorists who make online and mail requests to tax collectors. But the idea set off a firestorm among the elected officials who pride themselves on the quality of service they give customers. Tax collectors sent letters to Cabinet members and lobbied their aides, warning that a change in the tag delivery system would end up costing motorists more money. With opposition simmering, Jones asked her bosses — Scott and the three elected Cabinet members — for a delay.

"I need to be more specific with them before we continue the dialogue," Jones said. "I did not anticipate the level of resistance that I got." Jones said she'll re-submit the tag redesign at a future Cabinet meeting. Jones said "I had to hit the pause button. The drama had overtaken what good could come out of this." [Read the full story at Bradenton.com.](#)

Deal Appoints Dozier to Corrections, Mikell to Driver Services (Georgia)

Gov. Nathan Deal has announced the appointment of Robert G. Mikell to commissioner of the Georgia Department of Driver Services. Mikell will fill the vacancy left by outgoing Commissioner Greg Dozier, who is being named assistant commissioner, chief of staff of the Georgia Department of Corrections. "Georgia's Department of Corrections is one of the state's largest agencies, working to create a safer Georgia by managing offenders and providing opportunities for positive change," said Deal. "Greg has ably led DDS, and this promotion allows the state to use his talents to a further extent. Rob has proven himself as a great deputy for Greg and he's well-prepared to take on this added responsibility. Congratulations to them both." Mikell has served as deputy commissioner of the Department of Driver Services since March 2007. Prior to this role, Mikell was the deputy director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. Mikell currently serves as chairman of AAMVA International's Suspended and Revoked Drivers Work group, secretary of Georgia Piedmont Technical College's Law Enforcement Academy Advisory Board and is a member of the State Bar of Georgia. [Read the DDS press release.](#)

Law to Ban Texting While Driving in Oklahoma is Being Pushed

Partners of Drive Aware Oklahoma are pushing for legislation to ban texting while driving and to educate the public in the meantime about the dangers of inattentive driving. "We're working to make sure Oklahoma is not the last state to pass a texting while driving ban," said a spokesman for AAA Oklahoma. A study from the U.S. DOT states that a driver who is texting is 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than one who is not. The average text message takes the driver's eyes off the road for about 5 seconds; at 55 mph, that's enough to travel the length of a football field. According to the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office, nine fatal crashes, 547 injury crashes and 818 non-injury crashes in the state in 2010 can be attributed to a driver's being distracted by an electronic device. State law enforcement agencies support the texting ban because they see the dangers associated with distracted driving. Oklahoma law already bans texting while driving for any driver with a learner's or intermediate permit and any phone use by a bus driver. [Read the full story in Tulsa World.](#)

DMV Requests Funding to Implement Real ID (West Virginia)

The DMV wants to spend nearly \$1.4 million to hire 45 new employees to handle the extra burden of implementing the federal Real ID Act. The agency also says it hopes to invest \$3 million over the next five years to upgrade its 20-year-old computer system. DMV Commissioner Joe Miller included the spending plans as part of the DOT's 2014 fiscal year budget request. Earlier this year, the DMV implemented provisions of the federal Real ID Act. In his annual budget request to the State Budget Office, Miller admitted the new requirements have been taxing the DMV's resources. These changes have increased the transaction time to serve our customers, creating a need for additional personnel," Miller said. Complicating the matter is the fact that the agency's computer systems are relics of the 20th century. Miller said the agency plans to begin the process of upgrading the system. Officials hope to advertise for proposals from technology firms to upgrade their system next year. While that will help streamline the agency's process, Miller said more employees would still be needed to handle the longer customer transactions. Historically, the State Road Fund has paid for driver's license program costs. But with that fund unable to cover the state's road needs, officials have been reluctant to tap it to cover Real ID costs. The DMV has also had to absorb some additional operational costs by implementing the Real ID requirements. Those costs totaled about \$1.9 million last year. So far, the agency has been able to offset some costs by securing federal grants and strategically planning other expenditures. [Read the full story in the Daily Mail.](#)

Graduated Driver's License Law Credited with Reducing Accidents Involving Kansas Teens

The number of accidents involving teenage Kansas drivers has dropped sharply over the past few years, and safety experts say the graduated driver's license law that took effect Jan 1, 2010, has played a major role in the trend. "I think that's exactly the outcome we expected," said Suzanne Wikle, director of policy and research for Kansas Action for Children, a nonprofit group that pushed for the law. She said other states have seen similar results after enacting similar laws. An AAA Kansas spokesman said the law, combined with a growing use of seat belts among teen drivers, has had a major impact on teenage accidents statistics. Kansas DOT records show that the number of accidents involving drivers 14 through 16 dropped from more than 5,000 in 2004 and 2005 to fewer than 3,000 in 2011. The number of fatalities involving drivers in that age group averaged 22 a year from 2004 through 2009. Only 15 were recorded in 2010 and only nine in 2011. The number of accidents involving young drivers accidents was steadily declining even before the graduated licensing law took effect. He attributed the drop to other laws the Kansas Legislature has passed over the years, such as a 2007 law that required 14- to 17-year-olds to wear seat belts. The graduated license law carries two major provisions, both of which are designed to increase the amount of supervision a teenager receives before receiving an unrestricted driver's license. The law requires all teen drivers to hold a learner's permit for 12 months before obtaining a restricted or unrestricted driver's license. Once a 16-year-old has obtained a full license, he or she is prohibited during the first six months of driving from using cellphones, from having more than one non-sibling minor passenger, and from driving after 9 p.m. except to and from work or school. The one other important factor in teen driving safety is the increasing use of seat belts. The increase is being spurred in part by a relatively new program called S.A.F.E. – Seatbelts Are For Everyone. The program started in Crawford County in 2008 and has since spread to 37 other Kansas counties. At participating schools, students are asked to sign cards pledging to always wear seat belts. Seatbelt surveys are done at the beginning and end of the school year. Participating students are eligible for monthly \$25 gift card drawings. Grand prizes are awarded to the schools with the highest compliance rate and the biggest increase in seatbelt usage. Compliance rates at participating schools has risen, on average, from 73.7% to 82%. [Read the full story at Kansas.com.](#)

State Will Not Grant Driver's Licenses to DACA Immigrants (Michigan)

The Michigan Secretary of State's office has announced that it will not issue driver's licenses to beneficiaries of a federal policy pertaining to undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children. The state SOS determined earlier this month that under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy, beneficiaries are not "legally present" in the U.S. – a requirement for obtaining a Michigan driver's license, since the policy does not grant lawful status. Initially, it seemed that the Michigan Secretary of State would be issuing driver's licenses to these beneficiaries. "The DACA doesn't grant legal status to the individual that's participating, initially that was our understanding," said Fred Woodhams, spokesman for the Michigan Department of State. "Because of additional information we've been provided by the federal government, we now know that they will not be given any legal status, and under state law, we are not able to issue driver's licenses or state ID cards to people who are not legally present in the United States." Michigan law requires the SOS to verify the legal presence of a person applying for an ID or driver's license who is not a citizen of the United States. [Read the full story in the Grand Rapids Business Journal.](#)

All Five Military Branch Special License Plates Are Now Available With The Designation "U.S."

(Wisconsin)

A holder of a military special plate recently requested that his plate read U.S. Army Retired instead of simply Army Retired. The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs expressed

their support for the change and worked with the Division of Motor Vehicles to redesign the license plate decals on the Veteran, Reserve and Retired plates for all five military branches. Decals updated to include "U.S." include: Air Force Veteran, Air Force Reserve, Air Force Retired, Army Veteran, Army Reserve, Army Retired, Coast Guard Veteran, Coast Guard Reserve, Coast Guard Retired, Marine Corps Veteran, Marine Corps Reserve, Marine Corps Retired, Navy Veteran, Navy Reserve and Navy Retired. Current holders of the special military plates listed above who wish to display the new decal will need to purchase a set of replacement plates for \$10 – the standard special plate replacement fee. All new applications for these plates will receive the updated decals. Wisconsin now offers 56 different military plate options for veterans and recipients of certain military medals and honors. Military plates are available to active, reserve or retired U.S. military personnel, military academy students or alumni who submit proof of eligibility. [Read the DOT press release.](#)

Region IV News

'In God We Trust' License Plates May Soon Come to Utah

It began with the voice of one 11-year-old. Now a campaign is under way to gain 500 more Utahns who favor the idea of an "In God We Trust" specialty license plate. State legislators, board members for the Provo-based



America's Freedom Festival, and Mike Mower, deputy chief of staff to Gov. Gary Herbert, gathered Tuesday to unveil the new plate. The project was the brainchild of Mower's 11-year-old nephew, Tate Christensen, who is an avid motorcycle license-plate collector. He bought an "In God We Trust" license plate from Indiana for his collection on eBay recently. After the purchase, he was surprised to find that Utah doesn't yet have a plate with the same message. He discovered more than a dozen other states have license plates with the slogan on it or a similar "God Bless America" tag. So Christensen asked his uncle, who works in the governor's office, to work on expanding Utah's specialty license plate offerings. Mower then spoke with Evan Curtis in the state Office of Planning and Budget, and on his own time Curtis designed the "In God We Trust" sticker for the new plate. For the plate to move into production, 500 pre-orders are needed. Rep. Peterson and Sen. Weiler plan to sponsor legislation in the coming session to make the plate official. [Read the full story in the Salt Lake Tribune.](#)

Other News of Interest

NHTSA Studying Self-Driving Cars, Talking to State DMVs

Federal vehicle safety regulators have begun a 2-3-year research and study program aimed at developing standards for testing and regulating the technologies — and human behaviors — needed to make autonomous vehicles a reality. David Strickland, NHTSA administrator, outlined the timetable Tuesday in a seminar on the policy implications of self-driving cars, cautioning that the agency "is just at the very beginning of [this] research." Strickland said that the first step to gaining clarity is to understand how to test the reliability of the various technologies — including hardware and software — that enable self-driving cars. Old-fashioned track testing and crash testing probably won't cover everything because there are so many variables involved, he said, suggesting that the agency will have to come up with computerized testing programs to run self-driving systems through their paces. NHTSA also is working closely with various states that are interested in developing early regulations and with Google — a pioneer in autonomous vehicle development — and with various auto companies and components developers. Strickland suggested that self-driven vehicles could bring a new level of personal mobility to the sight-impaired and to aging baby boomers whose continued use of personal vehicles could be threatened by slowing reactions and failing eyesight. Almost every major automaker is developing some aspect of autonomous driving. Active safety systems such as lane-keeping assist and active cruise control form the building blocks for integrated

systems that will enable vehicles to operate without driver input. Strickland has been a vocal supporter of autonomous vehicle development, maintaining that with studies showing human error is a factor in 90% of all highway accidents, turning control over to computer-controlled vehicles could dramatically reduce accidents and the tens of thousands of fatalities that result from them each year. The latest federal statistics show there were 33,000 traffic accident fatalities and more than 6 million traffic accidents of various intensity reported to police in 2010. [Read the full story in InsideLine.com.](#)

Did you know . . .

Pigs don't sweat much, so they wallow in the mud to cool off their bodies. So how did the English language expression "sweating like a pig" develop? It's actually a reference to pig iron, which is form of iron smelting. When pig iron is originally created from iron ore, the smelter needs to heat the ore to extreme temperatures, and then move the liquid metal into the mold. Until the liquid cools, it can't be safely moved, as the extremely hot metal is liable to spill, burning whatever it comes in contact with. How does the smelter know when the metal is cool enough to transport? When the "pigs" "sweat." As the metal cools, the air around it reaches the dew point, causing droplets to form on the metal's surface.