



## AAMVA Regional News

December 14, 2012

### Tidbits

- The closing date for the RFI issued by the Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division for Driver License Issuance Project (#730-00068-12) has been extended to December 20, 2012. Review the RFI by [clicking here](#).
- The Illinois Office of the Secretary of has released a bid opportunity for the purchase and migration to a digital driver's license/identification card and facial recognition system. A copy of the bid documents, as well as additional information pertaining to the bid can be obtained from the [IL Procurement Bulletin](#).
- 2011 FARS data is now available. [Click here](#) to access the NHTSA information.
- Last year, the Virginia Chairs of the Senate and House Transportation Committees of the Virginia General Assembly called upon DMV to conduct two studies: one, an ongoing work group (the Non-Conventional Vehicles Study) to address the increasing consumer demand for vehicles that do not fit into current Virginia definitions, and another (the License Plate Study) to assess the current state of license plates and their potential to address the concerns of highway and public safety and transportation funding. Click the link to access the reports. [Non-Conventional Vehicles Report](#). [License Plate Study Report](#). Once you open the link, the pdf versions of the reports can be found in the upper right corner.
- Indiana Governor-elect Mike Pence has picked former Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Administrator John Hill to be executive director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. Hill served almost 30 years with the Indiana State Police and was commercial vehicle field enforcement division commander when he joined the FMCSA in 2003 as assistant administrator/chief safety officer. He served as administrator from 2006-2009, returning to Indiana at the end of the Bush administration to form The Hill Group, a transportation consulting firm.
- We're happy to report that Bonnie Rutledge, retired Director of the Vermont DMV is recovering nicely from a recent stroke. She is coming along on her walking and her speech. She has a new computer system and is working on communication and writing skills. She wishes her AAMVA family Happy Holidays.
- Clifton "Cliff" Burdette passed away last week after a long battle with cancer. Many of us remember Cliff as the State Coordinator for Motorcycle Safety in the state of Texas from 1987-2007. Click the links to his [obituary](#) and [guest book](#).

### Region I News

#### DMV Using Social Media to Reach Teen Drivers Effort to Spread Teen Safe Driving Messages

*(Connecticut)*

The DMV is branching into social media as a way to spread teen safe-driving safety messages to teens and others. DMV, through its Center for Teen Safe Driving, has developed a [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube video channel](#) to attract attention to safety issues related to 16- and 17-year-old drivers. The YouTube video channel showcases winners from DMV's annual statewide teen safe driving video contest for high school students. In addition, DMV

also has a general Twitter outreach to announce teen driving messages as well as other updates regarding the agency's services to the public. [Read the DMV press release.](#)

### **Maryland Practice Driving Test Now Available for Android Devices**

A new Android App to test drivers is now available from the Motor Vehicle Administration at the Google Play Store. The mobile application can test driving knowledge with a driver test tutorial that has been added to the mobile device. The app, which is also available for iPhone/iPad users, has already been downloaded by approximately 100,000. For those without access to mobile apps, an online version of the practice test can be accessed through the [MVA's website](#). The Android App, with up-to-date driver safety knowledge, can be used by anyone at anytime. The MVA has also rewritten the driver education curriculum and regulations to emphasize successful public safety strategies and added an on-road component to the driving skills test. The graduated driving licensing laws have been revised to raise the provisional driving age to 16 years and 6 months and more enforcement for infractions have been added as well. The MVA hopes the new online knowledge tutorial will enable more to pass the safety aspects of the law test. The MVA's 25-question knowledge test for new drivers reflects what is in the revamped handbook and tutorial. The Maryland practice driving test apps were developed at no charge for the MVA by NIC Inc., through a self-funded eGovernment services contract with the Department of Information Technology. The new Android App is just another way that the Maryland MVA is working Toward Zero Deaths, to drive down the number of fatalities on Maryland's roadways to zero. [Read the full story at SOMD.com.](#)

### **Lawmaker Pitches \$1,000 Penalty for 'Bogus' Speed Camera Tickets (Maryland)**

Speed camera companies and local governments would be penalized \$1,000 for each "bogus" citation issued to motorists under proposed legislation. Delegate Jon Cardin also wants to require governments in Maryland to submit regular speed camera audits to the General Assembly. And he wants to help ensure the accuracy of tickets by mandating precise time stamps on the two photos mailed to drivers as evidence of their speeding. His proposal comes after The Baltimore Sun found inaccuracies with five of the city's 83 automated speed cameras. With a new General Assembly session a month away, Cardin is the latest legislator to call for changes to the state law detailing how dozens of cities and counties in Maryland operate their speed camera programs. The law passed in 2009 with strong backing from Gov. O'Malley. Sen. James Brochin plans to sponsor a "correctional" bill to address several shortcomings he sees in the law. One would limit the operation of school zone cameras to school hours, rather than the current range of 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. year-round on weekdays. Brochin, an opponent of speed cameras, also wants to strengthen a provision that some lawmakers say already forbids governments from paying contractors a fee based on the number of tickets. Del. James Malone, who chairs the Motor Vehicles & Transportation subcommittee of the House Environmental Matters Committee, said his panel will look to overhaul the entire law. [Read the full story in the Baltimore Sun.](#)

### **Vermont Legislative Panel Ponders Whether Illegal Immigrants Should Get Driver's Licenses**

A legislative panel has put off issuing its final recommendation on allowing immigrant farm workers in the country illegally to get Vermont driver's licenses, but an unofficial straw vote showed committee members favoring it. The panel of nine, including lawmakers and representatives of farm, immigrant and human rights groups, put the finishing touches to a report that's to be given to lawmakers as they convene next month. It voted 8-1 to ask staff to produce a final report recommending that the farm workers be allowed to get licenses. Vermont has an estimated 1,500 Spanish-speaking farm workers, mainly on dairy farms and mainly from Mexico, who say they are isolated along Vermont's rural dirt roads because they can't drive. The committee drafting the report was

convened under legislation passed in the last session calling for a study of the issue. Committee members said the farm workers should be allowed to get standard state driver's licenses, but not the enhanced licenses available under a post-Sept. 11 federal law that allow people to use them instead of a passport when going to or returning from Canada. [Read the full story in The Republic.](#)

## Region II News

### **Prefiled Bill Would Increase Penalties for Unlicensed Drivers (Alabama)**

A prefiled bill would authorize police to transport those driving without being licensed to a place where they can pay a fine of at least \$200. The bill would not apply to those with a license who did not have it at the time of a stop. DPS had issued 19,567 citations for license violations through December 11. In 2011, officers wrote 23,402 citations. Under current law, those found to be driving without a valid license can be fined between \$100 and \$500 and can be subject to 180 days imprisonment. Drivers found without a valid license are typically issued a citation. The only time the vehicle would be impounded is if the driver's license was revoked or suspended for a DUI offense. However, the car would not be towed if the registered owner was in the vehicle and capable of driving. Besides the custodial arrest, the bill would increase the minimum fine to \$200. A driver without a license who gets involved in a traffic accident also would be considered negligent in the determination of fault-finding, and would face the possibility of paying damages caused in the accident. [Read the full story in the Montgomery Advertiser.](#)

### **Court Strikes Down Law That Banned Loud Music from Cars (Florida)**

On Thursday, the court released a ruling striking down a law that made it illegal for music coming from a car to be "plainly audible" from 25 feet or more. The court ruled on a pair of cases from Pinellas County. Both drivers were cited for playing their car stereos too loudly. One of them, lawyer Richard Catalano, was issued a \$73 ticket on his way to work in 2007 as a Justin Timberlake song blasted from his sound system. The justices called the law unconstitutional and an "unreasonable restriction on the freedom of expression." They wrote that it violated free speech rights for several reasons, including that the law exempted vehicles used for business or political purposes. The high court did not have a problem with a requirement in the law that a stereo must be "plainly audible" from 25 feet or more to be illegal, which a lower court had questioned. Instead, the justices said that it came down to the fact that the right to play amplified music in public is protected under the First Amendment. And, writing for the majority, Justice Jorge Labarga highlighted a part of the law that exempts commercial and political messages from the ban, saying it amounted to a restriction on certain kinds of speech, a violation of the First Amendment. Labarga's ruling also was skeptical of the state's argument that the ban was justified because it makes traffic safer. [Read the full story in the Miami Herald.](#)

### **Georgia Department of Driver Services Names New Deputy Commissioner**

Department of Driver Services Commissioner Rob Mikell recently announced the appointment of Spencer R. Moore as Deputy Commissioner effective December 16, 2012. Moore presently serves as Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. During his 14 years at GOHS, Moore has established himself as a national leader in highway safety issues by coordinating programs designed to reduce highway safety crashes, injuries and fatalities. Prior to joining GOHS, he served with the State Board of Pardons and Paroles and has been certified through the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council for over 15 years. At DDS, Moore will provide leadership and oversight for operations. He will work closely with Commissioner Mikell to identify methods to

strengthen the entire agency while focusing on the customer service values of communication, accountability, respect, and ethics. [Read the DDS press release.](#)

### **'Choose Life' License Plates Ruled Unconstitutional In North Carolina**

A federal judge ruled that North Carolina's new "Choose Life" license plates are unconstitutional because the state does not offer a pro-choice alternative. "The State's offering a Choose Life license plate in the absence of a pro-choice alternative constitutes viewpoint discrimination in violation of the First Amendment," U.S. District Court Judge James Fox wrote in the ruling. The ruling was praised by the American Civil Liberties Union, which had filed a lawsuit in 2011 to stop the specialty plates. The bill for the license plates passed in 2011, and the legislation also mandated that money raised from the sale of the specialty plates would go to a nonprofit that supports crisis pregnancy centers. During the fight to get the bill passed, North Carolina lawmakers voted down amendments that would have created pro-choice alternatives such as "Trust Women. Respect Choice". The "Choose Life" plates are available in 29 states, according to Choose Life Inc. [Read the full story at CNN.com.](#)

### **Virginia Lawmakers Seek to Loosen Reckless-Driving Rules**

Drivers caught doing 81 mph on a Virginia highway with a 70 mph speed limit could end up with a criminal record, and a bipartisan group of state lawmakers hopes to change that. Both Del. Joe Morrissey and Sen. Dick Black have filed legislation that would prevent state troopers from charging drivers doing 80 mph or more with reckless driving, a Class 1 misdemeanor. Gov. Bob McDonnell championed legislation in 2010 that raised the speed limit from 65 mph to 70 mph on rural stretches of Interstates 95, 64, 77 and 81. But lawmakers didn't change the rule that defines reckless driving as anything above 80 mph. Reckless driving is punishable by up to a year in prison or a \$2,500 fine, which means motorists clocked at 81 mph -- or 11 mph over the speed limit -- face a penalty far worse than a speeding ticket. The Virginia law was causing even more serious problems for drivers from the District, who had their licenses revoked by the city if they were charged with reckless driving in any jurisdiction. The problem got so bad that the D.C. Council in September passed emergency legislation ordering the District DMV to more carefully analyze out-of-state cases before pulling a resident's license. The changes lawmakers seek in the law would apply reckless-driving charges only against motorists caught traveling 20 mph or more above the posted speed limit. In a 70 mph zone, no one driving under 90 mph would be charged. [Read the full story in the Washington Examiner.](#)

### **Dirty License Plates Hinder State Road Funding (Virginia)**

A new DMV study finds many drivers are cheating the system costing the state \$70,000 a year. The report says drivers are using the E-Z Pass lane, but their plates are obstructed and unreadable, so the driver can't be charged. So Virginia State Police are looking into newer license plate designs as prevention. [Click on the video for the full report.](#)

## **Region III News**

### **Cullerton Lobbies for Driver's License Bill (Illinois)**

Senate President John Cullerton continued his push for legislation that would give a special driver's license to illegal immigrants. Under the measure, an estimated 250,000 illegal immigrants would be eligible for three-year renewable driver's licenses. The special licenses would require drivers to pass vision, written and road tests.

It could not be used as an official form of identification. The measure passed the Senate 41-14 Tuesday and will likely go to the House next month, where some lawmakers have indicated it could face steeper resistance. [Read the full story in the Chicago Tribune.](#)

### **Quinn Signs \$2 License Plate Sticker Fee Hike Into Law (Illinois)**

Illinois drivers will pay \$2 more for their license plate stickers next year thanks to a bill Gov. Pat Quinn signed Friday to pay for better upkeep and care of state parks. The practical effect of the new law is that drivers can expect the annual sticker for a regular license plate to hit \$101 in March, when the first batch of renewals will carry the price hike. Quinn supported the fee increase to generate more money to fix crumbling trails, leaky roofs, potholes and broken toilets in a state park system that's been subject to heavy funding cuts the past dozen years. The plates will let Illinoisans into parks for free, but the Department of Natural Resources is exploring how it might develop a plan to charge out-of-state visitors. The park system estimates it needs as much as \$750 million for repairs. The fee increase is expected to raise more than \$20 million a year. The agency plans to put half of the money into construction projects and the rest into staff and programs. [Read the full story in the Chicago Tribune.](#)

### **Ignition Interlock Mandatory for all Convicted Drivers in Manitoba**

Anyone convicted of impaired driving in Manitoba will have to have an ignition interlock device on their vehicle if they wish to drive legally. The new rule comes into effect on Saturday and will include first-time offenders. Mandatory ignition interlock program currently applies to drivers who are granted conditional licensing during an active alcohol-related suspension, repeat convicted offenders or first offences with aggravating factors. Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada says it fully supports Manitoba's tough stand against drinking drivers. The mandatory ignition interlock term lengths are one year for the first and second convictions, three years for a third and lifetime for the fourth and subsequent convictions. [Read the full story at CTVnews.ca.](#)

### **New Ohio Bill Would Raise Auto Insurance Requirements**

Both the Ohio House and Senate have passed a bill to increase the minimum amount of insurance every driver would be required to carry. House Bill 278, which would raise state minimum coverage requirements for auto insurance. No changes have been made to the minimum requirements since 1969. The current state minimum coverage is \$7500 toward property damage. Under the new legislation, that number would jump to \$25,000. The current required minimum for Bodily Injury Liability Coverage is \$12,500 per person injured in any one accident and \$25,000 for all persons injured in any one accident. The new legislation would double both of those figures. [Read the full story in The Republic.](#)

### **New Partnership between State Agencies Aims to Improve Safety of Everyone Involved in Crashes (Ohio)**

Traffic crashes often create delays, driver frustration, lost time, expenses and sometimes result in fatal secondary crashes. Now, a new initiative called Ohio QuickClear is working to improve the safety of everyone involved in a crash. The Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Department of Transportation have partnered with FMCSA to provide safety training to first responders. Ohio QuickClear is aimed to make sure first responders – like fire departments, emergency medical services and law enforcement – detect, respond and clear traffic crashes in a safe and timely manner. The effort is to ensure everyone is on the same page. More than 250 first responders and public safety partners across the state of Ohio have received training so far and they've been asked to bring their training back to their local areas. [Read the full story at WTOV9.com](#)

### **Alaska Lawmaker Plans Push for Voter Photo ID Law**

Rep. Bob Lynn says he plans to revive a dormant bill to require Alaskans to show a photo ID to vote. Voter photo ID laws in other states were hugely controversial in this fall's national elections because poor, elderly and minorities are less likely than other voters to have photo identification like a driver license; those same groups are also more likely to vote Democratic. Judges in two states with strict photo ID requirements, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, held off enforcement of those laws, at least for this election. In Alaska, where photo-bearing licenses aren't even necessary to drive in 294 villages, towns and communities off the highway system, such a requirement could affect thousands of voters. Current law allows voters to identify themselves with a driver license - either with a picture or the special rural license that has no picture - or numerous documents that don't have photographs but can tie a voter by name to an address: a birth certificate, hunting or fishing license, bank statement, utility bill, paycheck, government check "or other government document." The DMV has a special "valid without photo license" for rural residents who don't have easy access to an official DMV office. There's also a special off-highway license that allows rural residents to get a license without a road test. Those documents are valid in 294 villages, towns and settlements off the highway grid. [Read the full story in the Anchorage Daily News.](#)

### **'Joey's Law' Toughens Restrictions for Hit-Run Motorists (Arizona)**

Motorists who kill someone and drive away now could lose their licenses for a decade. Under Joey's Law, when hit-and-run accidents result in death, drivers can lose their licenses for up to 10 years but can apply for a restricted license after five years. If a hit-and-run victim is seriously injured, the driver will lose his or her license for up to five years. The license-revocation period in either case starts after the driver is released from jail. Before the law was passed, hit-and-run drivers could lose their license for five years if someone was killed; three years if someone was injured. And those periods could begin while in jail, where the offender would not need a car. Joey Romero, 18, the youngest of six kids, died in October 2010. Laura Flanders, now 25, drove on a sidewalk and ran down the high school senior as he walked home from his job at a dollar store. Police records describe Flanders as so incoherent from prescription medication that she thought she hit a tree, pole or bush. A grand jury indicted Flanders on one count each of manslaughter and leaving the scene of an accident. She has pleaded not guilty and is scheduled to appear in court next week. [Read the full story at AZCentral.com.](#)

### **DMV Creates Enterprise Risk Management Program (California)**

The California DMV has created a risk management program to effectively identify, assess and manage enterprise risks for the department, according to DMV Deputy Director Bernard C. Soriano, who now heads the program. "Historically, we've been doing some form of risk management in various pockets of the department. And now, since the beginning of the fiscal year, we've brought various functions together to perform risk management in a more cohesive form—focusing on auditing, information security and oversight. This helps us look at projects and analyze how they might impact other areas of the department," Soriano said. The DMV is working with CalHR—the new combined SPB and DPA—to seek approval for this organizational change. The department is also aiming to contract out for off-the-shelf software specifically designed for risk management. Enterprise risk management is about making and keeping department objectives. As an example of a tech initiative for which his team would be examining risk, Soriano cited a new customer flow queuing and appointment system at DMV field offices. Risk management staff will have to look at the risks involved and examine any litigation that may be needed in order to

meet the project's goal. The DMV currently models its enterprise risk management practices on framework developed by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO), which provides specific directions on how to identify potential events that may affect the entity, manage risk to be within its "risk appetite," and provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of entity objectives. "Our job is to look deeper and examine what risks are involved before making any decisions," Soriano said. [Read the full story in Techwire.net.](#)

### **New License Could Speed Border Crossings (California)**

California motorists who frequently travel to Mexico could soon be offered a special driver's license designed to speed up border crossings while still protecting national security. California would become the first southwestern border DHS. Assemblyman Ben Hueso is carrying a bill to launch an "enhanced driver's license" program. Widespread use of the new license would reduce overall border wait times and encourage more trade and travel between the two countries, supporters say. But critics worry about potential invasions of privacy, the threat of stealing personal information and counterfeiting documents. The enhanced driver's license is a voluntary program established by DHS in the wake of mounting criticism over gridlock at borders caused by tighter security and also the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative that dictated the use of passports to re-enter the U.S. from Mexico or Canada. Under the program, applicants would pay an additional fee of \$75 and agree to specialized images that rely on facial recognition technology rather than traditional photographs by the DMV. Thorough background checks would be required. Only those eligible for U.S. passports could apply. In return, those holding the license can use the already quicker "Ready Lanes" to cross into the U.S. rather than wait in the slower all-purpose line. At the checkpoint, a border agent would use a hand-held computer to "read" information embedded in the license and permission to enter is almost instantaneous. Without the license, an agent must manually enter personal data into a computer and wait for verification, which compounds delays. The enhanced driver's license does not replace the even stricter "pass card" that allows frequent travelers to use separate "SENTRI" lanes reserved for those with even more specialized documents and have undergone personal interviews with security officials. The enhanced driver's license would replace the need to carry a passport, however. No hearing date has been set and Gov. Jerry Brown has not taken a position. [Read the full story in the Union Tribune.](#)

### **State Should Consider Ending Vehicle Emissions Testing, Audit Says (Colorado)**

A state audit released Wednesday questions whether Colorado's vehicle- inspection program is really needed for air quality, noting that 93% of cars already pass the tests. The report, released by the state auditor, says Coloradans would save nearly \$30 million a year if more cars were allowed to forgo the tests instead of just those manufactured in the past four years. The state set up the auto-inspection program in 1980, and it now operates in nine metro-Denver and northern Front Range counties. Cars made in 1981 or earlier must have annual emissions testing, while models from 1982 onward must be tested every other year. Vehicles manufactured in the past four years are exempt. Vehicles that meet requirements after driving by roadside testing stations don't have to go to bricks-and-mortar locations but still must pay the fee. Cars that flunk the inspections must get repaired and pass another test before owners can renew their tags. But as the audit showed, almost all vehicles now pass the emissions tests. The test costs motorists \$25 for 1982 and newer-model vehicles and \$15 for older cars. The audit recommends exempting 2001 and newer-model vehicles from the testing, which would save Coloradans \$28.4 million a year in fees paid to test their cars. The audit also recommends replacing traditional testing for most cars, which involves running them on treadmills and recording emissions outputs, and instead using the on-board diagnostic computers that have been built into most vehicles since 1996. [Read the full story in the Denver Post.](#)

### **Bullock Names Directors for Transportation, Natural Resources** *(Montana)*

Governor-elect Steve Bullock has appointed two more department directors — Mike Tooley to head the state Department of Transportation and John Tubbs to lead the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. This week, Tooley resigned as colonel and chief of the Montana Highway Patrol, where he had worked for 28 years. Tubbs, who had worked for the DNRC from 1985 to 2009, most recently has worked as deputy assistant secretary for water and science for the U.S. Department of Interior in Washington, D.C. They will take office Jan. 7 when Bullock is sworn in as governor. Their appointments are subject to confirmation by the Montana Senate. [Read the full story in the Billings Gazette.](#)

### **NDOT to Seek Tougher Seat Belt Law** *(Nevada)*

NDOT director Rudy Malfabon says in Clark County alone, 88 people have been killed in traffic accidents this year, an increase of 54% from 2011. There have been 37 pedestrian deaths in the county, up 37% from a year ago. Malfabon told the state Board of Transportation on Monday that the agency will ask the 2013 Legislature to enact a primary seat belt law allowing police to pull over a driver for not wearing a safety belt. Under existing law an officer can only cite a driver for a seat belt violation if stopped for another infraction. [Read the full story in the Las Vegas Sun.](#)

### **Experts Say Traffic Specific Police Force Would Help Lower Highway Fatalities** *(Saskatchewan)*

With 155 deaths on provincial highways in Saskatchewan this year, some experts say a traffic enforcement police force could be the right move for the province. Dr. Louis Hugo Francescutti, a professor at the University of Alberta's School of Public Health, an emergency room physician and a specialist in injury prevention said he feels a force like the Alberta traffic sheriffs would benefit Saskatchewan. "In Alberta we've created sheriffs and the sheriffs responsibility are to enforce traffic safety, unfortunately, the RCMP and most police forces don't view traffic as a high priority," said Francescutti. "Obviously there are better synergies when you have people who are dedicated to specific tasks, versus a general police officer, who has much more functionality and priorities (that) are different," said Gerry Shimko the executive director of Edmonton's office of traffic safety. Rebecca Schulz, manager of media relations with SGI said although there is currently no plans to implement a traffic enforcement police force, SGI is concerned about the rise in highway fatalities and are constantly examining what other provinces are doing in terms of traffic safety. "We are always monitoring what other jurisdictions like Alberta are doing in terms of traffic safety, we consider those results and we look at how applicable they are to Saskatchewan." The RCMP does have a unit dedicated to traffic enforcement in the province. [Read the full story in Metro Saskatoon.](#)

### **Dangerous Distraction: Study Finds Many Texting Pedestrians** *(Washington)*

Researchers, observing pedestrians in Seattle, found that nearly one in three people crossing the street at high-risk intersections was distracted by use of a mobile device. Only one in four followed the full safety routine of looking both ways, obeying the lights, and crossing at the appropriate point, the study found. Texting was particularly dangerous, said Dr. Beth Ebel, study co-author and director of the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center of the University of Washington. Texters were four times less likely to look before crossing, obey lights or cross at the appropriate place. They also spent more time in the intersection, by nearly 2 seconds, on average. For the study, published online in the journal Injury Prevention, observers watched 1,102 Seattle pedestrians at 20 high-risk intersections during randomly assigned times. Distraction in general — and texting in particular — is associated with risk for pedestrians. Vehicle-pedestrian accidents injure 60,000 and kill 4,000 people every year in this country. In 2010, there were 529 pedestrian-involved collisions in Seattle, with at least 252 involving some

injury. Fifty were serious injuries and six were fatal, according to a Seattle DOT study, which did not specify mobile-device use. The Consumer Product Safety Commission said more than 1,100 people wound up in hospitals or emergency rooms last year as a result of injuries that occurred while they were using a mobile device while walking — likely an undercount, experts said, as patients are reluctant to volunteer the information. People distracted by pets or children were almost three times as likely to skip looking both ways. Nearly 80% of the pedestrians observed were walking alone, and the large majority obeyed the lights and crossed at the crosswalk. Most of those distracted by mobile devices were listening to music (about 11%), with more than 7% texting and more than 6% talking or listening on a handheld phone. Female pedestrians, whether distracted or not, were somewhat less likely to look both ways while crossing the street. [Read the full story in the Seattle Times.](#)

#### Did you know . . .

- In 1931, construction workers raised a 20-foot tree on the muddy site that would become Rockefeller Center. They had no idea that, 70 years later, tens of thousands of people would crowd the sidewalks for the ceremonial lighting of this year's 74-foot Norway Spruce, which features 30,000 bulbs attached to 5 miles of wiring. The glitzy star atop this year's tree weighs a whopping 500 pounds and is adorned with 25,000 Swarovski crystals.
- The largest gingerbread house in the U.S. was fittingly constructed inside the largest mall in the U.S. when a 67-foot-tall gingerbread abode was built inside Minnesota's Mall of America in 2006. The house, which took nine days to construct, could have fit the country's largest gingerbread man, also made in 2006, who stood over 20 feet high and weighed over 1,308 pounds. In 2009, a potentially record-breaking gingerbread man was created in Madison, Wis., but Guinness World Records has yet to officially recognize the achievement.
- Movies releasing during the holidays typically rake in big dough. In 2009, *Sherlock Holmes* grossed about \$24.6 million dollars on Christmas Day, setting an all-time single-day record for Dec. 25. *Avatar* ranks first in New Year's Day sales, having made nearly \$25.3 million on Jan. 1, 2010. Also ranking high on the charts for both days is 2004's *Meet the Fockers*, grossing \$19.5 million on Christmas and \$18.3 million on New Year's Day.