

February 2011 – ISSUE 124

An Update from the “Fit to Drive” Program

A research team from Selkirk College lead by Dr. Delia Roberts has been busy this winter collecting data on the stresses of log hauling on driver’s health and wellness and the impact of such stresses affecting a driver’s ability to react quickly to unpredictable situations. Twenty drivers from the Okanagan and Princeton Weyerhaeuser Operations have worn heart rate monitors and activity monitors during two days of driving. On one day, drivers followed their normal eating and hydration patterns and were tested approximately every three hours to see how quickly they could respond to both simple and complex stimuli. The speed of response, accuracy and even the degree of consistency in response were evaluated. At the same time, drivers gave a small blood sample for measurement of blood sugar. On the second testing day the lucky participants were provided with delicious snacks that were high in protein and complex carbohydrates, vitamins, antioxidants and fibre. Drivers were encouraged to eat and drink a small amount every two hours and the testing was repeated. Most drivers reported an improvement in energy levels when they “fuelled up” regularly, and the preliminary results of the cognitive testing showed that especially for complex tasks involving a choice of responses, they were nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of a second faster in their responses when blood sugar was maintained at a constant level. Imagine how much can happen each second your truck is in motion and how your energy levels can influence your ability to react?!

The study has also been recording key movements that driver’s make that can place them at risk for injury. These findings will be used to design exercises that can be used to decrease back pain and help provide protection against injuries to back, neck, shoulders and knees.

Throughout March and April the research team will continue to collect data on log haulers in Washington and Oregon. When completed, the study findings will be used to create a series of training materials to help drivers better manage their energy while working. The result of this study will be available for the log hauling community and general public this coming fall.

Study funding was provided by the BC Forest Safety Council and Weyerhaeuser Company Ltd.

2011 – The Year The Groundhog Lied?

For those living in the north, having six months of winter (or more!) is not uncommon although at times it's not enjoyed, that's simply the life of a northerner. However, this winter many communities throughout the province are seeing and experiencing an increased presence of Old Man Winter. Now as much as we would all like to give Mr. Groundhog our two cents this also means that the presence of winter will continue to have an impact on your travels. So before you go ahead and begin preparing your vehicles for picnics on the beach, remember the following tips to help ensure your safe voyages while winter apparently insists on staying for awhile longer.

Maintain a Safe Distance

In adverse conditions, especially when roads become wet and/or slippery, it will take longer for your vehicle to stop. Give yourself at least 4 seconds distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you.

Km/Hr = Road Conditions

Posted speeds are the maximum you should maintain during optimal conditions. Ice and snow can create hazardous conditions which can pose dangerous situations. Drive at a slower speed and to the conditions of the road.

Be on the Look-Out for Black Ice

Shaded areas, overpasses and bridges tend to freeze faster than other sections of road. This hidden and very serious hazard can cause you to lose traction, cornering control and braking.

Accelerate and Brake Slowly

When starting from a completed stop, accelerate slowly and gently. When coming to a completed stop, anticipate the stop by giving yourself enough time and distance to brake in a controlled manner.

Avoid Sudden Moves

Steer smoothly into corners, avoid sudden manoeuvres, accelerate gently and brake early and cautiously. Try to anticipate corners, lane changes, stops and changing road conditions like snow drifts or frozen bridges.

Handling a Skid

If your vehicle starts to skid, ease off the accelerator or brake. Do not make any sudden movements, like pumping the brakes or over steering. Look in the direction that you want to head in and steer the vehicle smoothly.

Be Visible

Drive with your headlights on - snow drifts and low light conditions can impair visibility.

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