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The driver is responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle. This message first appears on dashboard display screens each time many newer cars and trucks are started. Most owners of these vehicles probably cannot recall or recite that sentence.

In fact, while most drivers probably believe they drive safely, they are often preoccupied with personal matters of the day as they head down the road.

While vehicles are safer than ever, New Hampshire experienced an alarming 44 percent increase in highway fatalities in 2018, up 44 percent from 102 in 2017.

According to Captain William Haynes, Commander of the NH Office of Highway Safety, over 90 percent of fatal and injury crashes are related to driver behavior behind the wheel. “Alcohol and drugs, speed and driver distraction – any of these factors in combination are a recipe for disaster,” Haynes says. “It’s bad choices.”

For nearly four years, New Hampshire has had a law that prohibits using electronic hand-held devices while driving. While that has certainly helped cut down on driver multi-tasking, State Police issued nearly 10,000 tickets in 2017 to drivers who may have violated that law.

Regular commuters speak of watching people eating, performing personal grooming, and even reading newspapers while traveling 70 miles per hour on an interstate highway. Aggressive driving is also an issue, with drivers changing lanes at high speeds and tailgating others to move them out of their way.

Part of the problem may be that drivers have become too comfortable in their vehicles, and have a reduced sense of the speeds they are traveling. The increased technology they now benefit from in their vehicles may be contributing to less focus on just driving.

Increased speeds often bring public calls for reducing speed limits on certain sections of roadway. Research has consistently demonstrated that simply lowering the value on the speed limit sign does not change driver behavior. Drivers will travel at the speed they feel comfortable driving at. If we want to change behavior we need to change the character of the roadway, otherwise it will be a constant enforcement issue.

During winter storms, our dedicated plow drivers work around the clock to clear and treat the highways. Motorists must give themselves more time and drive according to the conditions. It is unrealistic to expect bare pavement when it is snowing and even when the roads appear to be well treated, there can still be black ice.

But the grim statistics make it clear that drivers in New Hampshire need to pay attention and make the right choices when behind the wheel of a vehicle. Don’t drive distracted; watch your speed; and never drive impaired.
It arose in 2018 on a side road near US 302 in Haverhill, replacing a red list timber trestle bridge. The new Mill Street Bridge over the Ammonoosuc Rail Trail features an impressive arch that provides the required railroad clearance (under NH State law) if the railroad service ever returns on the Berlin Branch line.

"Given the confined nature of the site and the need to maintain safe slope conditions without any shoring, an access road to transport backfill material directly into the reinforced strip zone area of the MSE wing walls wasn’t possible for a large portion of the panel installation," Garret said. "Instead, backfill material was unloaded in front of the wing walls and moved via excavator bucket up and over the walls as MSE panels were being installed. This proved to be a rather tedious but effective method of construction."

Based on its history, the pre-cast arch fill-over structure will require minimal maintenance, and will be taken over by the town as part of an agreement with the NHDOT. The $1.2 million project was built by Audley Construction, of Bow. It opened to traffic in early November.
**A Very Close Call with Flying Ice on Route 101**

Bill Taylor was heading home from his work day as a field inspector for the Construction Bureau when it happened. He was driving westbound on Route 101 in Epping on January 31st when his day, and almost his life, changed dramatically. Suddenly a huge sheet of ice came off of the box truck five car lengths ahead and flew straight at him, smashing through the driver’s side of the windshield and striking him in the head.

“I tucked my chin and ducked my head down. It definitely could have killed me,” Bill recalled a day later. “If it hit me in the throat or chest I probably would have been dead.”

Shaken but still conscious, Bill managed to drive his NHDOT pickup truck to the side of the highway. Another motorist stopped to assist and called 911. Bill was treated at a Manchester hospital for a cut on the forehead that required several stitches, but otherwise escaped mostly unscathed. He attributed the safety sunglasses, his stocking cap, and even his beard for helping to prevent more serious injuries.

“There’s really no excuse for not doing it,” Bill said. “I’m glad to be alive.”

**Improving the flow at a Hooksett Pond**

District 5 forces have installed new grates at Goldfish Pond in Hooksett. The goal is for the grate to be more self-cleaning (the old grate was vertical, not sloped) and have the bar spacing be wider to reduce the clogging potential. The grates are made from rebar and were painted with epoxy paint for durability.

The new grates are working as planned, collecting debris at the base, while allowing water to flow around the structure and through the outlet.

The improved grate system was designed by District 5, and manufactured by Eric Bellemore and Elliot Haas of the Derry Patrol Shed (528).

Pictured are Kevin King, Scott Foster, Kevin Worster, Scott Marshall and Ryan Nickerson (Construction). Ziggy Plifka was running the excavator.
The picturesque Baker River winds along parts of NH Route 118 in Warren. The usually peaceful river became a raging torrent during a storm in October 2017, washing away an embankment and an entire lane of NH 118 for about 100 yards.

A year later work began on an emergency repair project to reconstruct that section of roadway back to two lanes while stabilizing and shoring up the embankment.

The conventional repair would be to reconstruct the embankment, armor it with stone, and build a retaining wall in what is a tight location adjoining the river. But the NHDOT decided to take a different approach to be used for the first time in New Hampshire.

"It would have been very difficult to anchor stone into the river bed because of exposed bedrock and the smooth surface," says Pete Stamnas, NHDOT’s Director of Project Development. "There was concern a typical repair utilizing a stone armored slope would be an ongoing issue, and we wanted to minimize the risk of further erosion."

This new approach suggested by NHDOT geologist Krystle Pelham still involved using stone fill, but wrapping it in a heavy duty chain link fence-type blanket (TECCO) and also anchoring it into bedrock and the slope with soil nails. The soil nails are tensioned and locked into place with armor plates placed on the surface of the TECCO mesh blanket to tie it all together.

The alternative was also more constructible during winter months since it involved stone and earth work rather than concrete placement.

Weaver Brothers Construction is the contractor for the $2.34 million project, which has a final completion date of June 28, 2019.
After decades of trying to address longstanding flooding issues along NH Route 28, the NHDOT is trying a new “non-lethal” strategy to deal with the beavers causing the high water.

The Department’s contractor, Skip Lisle from Grafton, Vermont, has constructed two new flow control devices called “beaver deceivers,” which will manage beaver behavior.

This approach, previously proven elsewhere, combines fencing and pipe systems that deceive beavers into keeping their dams outside of the Department’s undersized and vulnerable stone box culverts that convey stream flows beneath the Manchester and Lawrence railroad embankment.

Beavers had previously lodged their dams inside the culverts, which caused chronic flooding of nearby property and highways.

“If we can keep the water off NH-28 for a year – if we can keep the water off those people’s cellars and driveways for a year without any emergency maintenance – and the beaver is still existing in the watershed, then that’s already paid for itself,” Larry Keniston (Rail and Transit) says.

District 5 crews from the 512 Londonderry patrol shed helped to remove the beaver dams and draw down the water for the installation of these devices.

“Beaver Deceivers”

Being Tested in Londonderry

The new deceivers include pipes and filters that prevent flooding by letting the culvert drain, while allowing beavers to stay and build a dam up to a safe height.

“These two twin culverts that we’ve fixed are the most vulnerable culverts that we have and they do the most damage,” says Larry Keniston, an engineer with NHDOT’s Rail and Transit bureau.
The NH Fish and Game Department partnered with the NH Department of Transportation and NH Department of Environmental Services in the past year to research wildlife corridors in New Hampshire. Wildlife corridors are critical for the conservation of wildlife in the Granite State.

Rebecca Martin, a Senior Environmental Manager in the NHDOT’s Environment Bureau, was a Planning Team and Lead Author contributing to the final report.

Among the report’s recommendations is to “Communicate wildlife crossing priorities that overlap transportation infrastructure to NHDOT, town conservation commissions, and town road agents.”

To see the report in its entirety and to learn more about wildlife corridors visit: wildlife.state.nh.us/nongame/corridors.html

AED Donation

The 312 patrol facility in Wakefield has a new AED (Automated External Defibrillator), thanks to a generous donation from Jeanne Marie Rousseau and her husband Raymond Dodier, Jr., (pictured holding the AED), who is a member of the 312 crew. Jeanne won the life saving device in a contest sponsored by AED.US. From Jeanne’s write-up for the AED.US website: “What’s great is that in NH when there is stormy weather so many places close up shop and no one is available. However, you will always find these workers out in stormy weather, and they are always willing to help. This shed is where multiple state police, ambulance, local police, and school buses fuel up. Having this available can save a life.”
The drive on West Shore Road along Newfound Lake offers some amazing views, particularly where the road is wedged between the lake and the steep rock face known as "The Ledges" in Alexandria. This area is also problematic year round for NHDOT maintenance forces, with snow occasionally sliding down off the ledges in the winter months, as well as ongoing concerns about rock and trees falling into the roadway.

This concern was highlighted in September 2018 when a tree fell and struck a car, flipping the car into the lake. Fortunately the driver of the car escaped with only minor injuries.

As the NHDOT began working on a plan to address the safety concern, the steep rock face created a unique challenge for tree cutting crews: how to enable a crane to safely operate above energized power lines without taking a multi-day outage that would impact about 450 electric customers.

"We were literally caught between a rock and a hard place because we needed to protect the integrity of the power lines on our property, but we also had an important public safety concern to address," said District 2 Maintenance Supervisor Dennis Ford.

"Eversource’s crews completed the work to provide us access in a week so that we were able to conduct the drone inspection before the snow fell. That was really important to ensure that we were able to take an accurate and thorough assessment of any cracks in the rocks."
In addition to removing some potentially hazardous trees, climbing crews from Americtech Slope Constructors were able to inspect the slope for possible loose rock using rock access methods. The tree removal also allowed for further assessment of the slope stability by using a Unmanned Aerial Device (drone).

With the results of the inspections, the NHDOT is developing a plan to stabilize the embankment, which may include more work using limited access techniques and potentially drilling and bolting hazardous unstable rocks in place.

“We were literally caught between a rock and a hard place because we needed to protect the integrity of the power lines on our property, but we also had an important public safety concern to address,” said District 2 Maintenance Supervisor Dennis Ford.
New “Fact Book” tells the NHDOT Story by the Numbers

A new 2019 NHDOT Fact Book should prove to be a valuable resource for telling the transportation story in New Hampshire.

“This Fact Book provides information on who we are, how we are structured, which assets we are responsible for, and what funding is available for transportation. It also provides some current statistics on safety, condition and use of the system,” commented Commissioner Victoria Sheehan.

The 55 page fact book, which has been produced in a pocket size for lawmakers and other transportation stakeholders, addresses virtually everything the NHDOT does and how it does it.

Commissioner Sheehan says the Department’s goal is to clearly convey the message of what we do, why we do it, and what value our operation has to the public.

“It is particularly important to communicate what level of service can be expected with different levels of resources and financial investment. The complexity of the transportation system, as well as the complexities of operating and construction funding, does make it challenging to explain our priorities and capabilities,” Commissioner Sheehan says.

Beating a Path to the Holiday Doors

Creativity rose to a new level in year two of a holiday door decorating contest at the NHDOT headquarters (Morton Building) in Concord promoted by the Human Resources Bureau.

The friendly competition among several bureaus brought forward many innovative looks, with some designers adding LED lights and three dimensions to their masterpieces. In a move ripped from the headlines, both the Bridge Maintenance and Bridge Design designs had covered bridges being struck by vehicles (one was Santa’s sleigh).

The winner, unanimously selected by a panel of judges, was the entry from the Bureau of Environment that featured Santa driving a NHDOT snowplow with a reindeer riding shotgun. Headlights glowed and red lights on top of the cab flashed in an eye-catching display. Second Place went to Highway Design, with the Print Shop selected for Third Place.

Look! Up in the Sky! It’s Ice Halos!

It started out as just another Saturday of skiing for Steve LeBaron (Highway Design) and his girlfriend. But an atmospheric wonder in the sky over Cannon Mountain on December 1st had everyone on the slopes looking up and reaching for their cameras.

A photo shared by Steve was posted to the NHDOT Facebook page and went viral, attracting over a half million views and even the attention of a Washington Post reporter. Matthew Capucci’s article about the rare ice halo event was entitled: “The story behind an incredible sky scene in New Hampshire” and referred to the photo as “dazzling…a stunner…that actually includes seven atmospheric phenomenon.”

According to the Washington Post story, “Temperatures below freezing and moisture aloft combined to produce a layer of ice crystals in the sky. That alone isn’t terribly unusual. But in this case, the crystals were predominantly shaped as hexagonal columns.”
James “Jimmy” Kuntz retired on November 1st with almost 40 years of State service, all with the Turnpikes Bureau. Jimmy’s entire NHDOT career was at the Hampton Maintenance Facility. He began as a Highway Maintainer 1 on February 4, 1979 and worked his way up to Patrol Foreman in 1990.

Wayne England was recognized for 30 years of service at the November major staff meeting. The Highway Patrol Foreman (Franklin #211) is a “master grader operator… who is willing to help anyone,” according to District 2 Engineer Doug King.

Debbie Weil retired from the NHDOT on November 30th with 35 years of State Service. The prequalification administrator spent all but a few months of her DOT career in the Contracts Office.

Margaret Blacker (Turnpikes) was recognized for 30 years of NHDOT service at the February major staff meeting. The Business Administrator has also worked in the Finance and Public Works Bureaus.

Walter Keuenhoff retired January 17th with 40+ years of State service. Walter served as supervisor of the Outdoor Advertising Control Section at the Bureau of Traffic for many years.

Bob Landry, Administrator of the Bridge Design Bureau, was recognized for 30 years of NHDOT service at the November major staff meeting.

After 17+ years of working on the railroad, Brian Lombard, Railroad Operations Engineer in the Rail & Transit Bureau, retired from State service on January 31st.

Chuck Schmidt, Administrator of the Right-of-Way Bureau, retired on January 31st from a career at the NHDOT of more than 34 years.

Raymond Shepardson (District 2) retired on December 31st. The Highway Maintainer II worked out of the 204 patrol facility in North Haverhill, plowing the same route for his entire 18 years. Ray was presented with a maple clock, made by the 206 crew in Bristol, by District 2 Maintenance Supervisor Dennis Ford.
Service Awards (1st Quarter)

10 Years:
- Richard D. Faul Jr - Highway Design
- Stephanie L. Micucci - Highway Design
- Joshua D. Lafond - AMPS
- Justin A. Smith - District 2
- Raymond A. Cornish - District 2
- Lucas A. Siik - TSMO
- Kevin J. Belanger - District 4
- Deirdre T. Nash - Materials & Research
- Daniel A. Hotaling - Mechanical Services

15 Years:
- David A. Gray Jr - Turnpikes
- Victoria A. Meyer - Planning & Community Assistance
- Jason L. Marro - District 1
- David J. Proulx - Turnpikes
- Brian J. Labrecque - Bridge Maintenance

20 Years:
- John W. Arsenault - Finance
- Daniel T. Cloutier - District 4
- Ann M. Sargent - Turnpikes
- Jeffrey N. Huckins Sr - Mechanical Services
- Debra C. Grinley - Turnpikes
- David D. Almon - District 6
- Christopher W. Brown - District 1
- Raymond J. Wilder III - District 2
- Donald G. White - District 3
- Charles E. Lowe Jr - Mechanical Services
- Elbert M. Dickinson - District 2
- Craig A. Levesque - District 1
- Kevin T. Nyhan - Environment
- Diane M. Weaver - Turnpikes

25 Years:
- Kenneth R. Mailhot - District 6
- Richard C. Radwanski - District 5
- Leighton C. Greenwood - District 1
- Dwayne A. Searles - District 4
- Carl R. Ouellette - Bridge Maintenance

30 Years:
- Ronald D. Allaire - District 5
- Caleb B. Dobbs - Highway Maintenance
- Margaret S. Blacker - Turnpikes
- Anita L. Miville - Turnpikes
- Eric G. Sargent - Right-Of-Way
- Michelle A. Drouin - Finance
- Craig A. Drouin - Highway Design

35 Years:
- Joseph C. Ingerson - Bridge Maintenance
- Dix E. Bailey - Turnpikes
- Timothy J. Blake - Mechanical Services
- Patrick C. Herlihy - Commissioner's Office
- Michael W. Eldridge - District 3

40 Years:
- Eric S. Keskinen - Right-Of-Way
- Dana S. Parker - Mechanical Services

Two NHDOT employees were recognized at a UNH Technology Transfer Center (T2) ceremony for achieving the level of “Master Road Scholar,” which requires 100 course hours in such training areas as safety, environment, supervisory and technical. Pictured are: Caleb Dobbs - T2 Advisory Board member/State Maintenance Engineer; Bryan Pease - 324 New Hampton Patrol Foreman (Master Road Scholar); Raymond Dodier Jr. - 312 Wakefield Highway Maintainer III (Master Road Scholar); and Alan Hanscom - District 3 Maintenance Engineer.
Personnel Updates

New Hires:
- Jeffrey B. Marshall - District 5, Crew 10
- Matthew W. Martino - District 2, Crew 12
- Arin J. Mills - Environment
- Jeffrey L. Mills - Mechanical Div-Concord
- Barbara A. Mitera - Commissioner’s Office
- Julian G. Mocanu - Tpk-Hooksett Maintenance
- Shawn P. Newhook - District 1, Crew 14
- Jose A. Perez Gonzalez - Construction
- Cameron G. Randall - Mechanical Div-Enfield
- Jacob M. Reed - District 5, Crew 3
- Danny L. Russell - District 5, Crew 28
- William R. Sheppard - District 3, Crew 1
- Michael R. Spaulding - District 1, Crew 14
- Michael S. Ulbin - District 5, Crew 10
- Anna C. Voglino - District 4, Crew 8
- Nancy L. Welsh - Right Of Way
- Scott M. Wright - District 2, Crew 12

Promotions:
- Leonard Smith - Highway Maintainer III, District 4
- William Patten - Assist. Highway Patrol Foreman, District 4
- Matthew Clark - Highway Patrol Foreman, District 4
- Pamela Mack - Program Specialist II, Finance
- Kyle Bowser - Highway Maintainer III, Turnpikes
- Eric Follansbee - Highway Maintainer III, Turnpikes
- Daniel Pare’ - Assist. Highway Patrol Foreman, District 4
- Robert Boynton - Highway Maintainer III, District 5
- Jonathan Pratt - Assist. Highway Patrol Foreman, District 4
- Nathan Alden - Highway Maintainer III, District 3
- Laura Guimont - Program Specialist I, Finance
- Andrew Huckins - Highway Maintainer III, District 3
- Mark Hamilton - Highway Maintainer III, District 6
- Jeffrey York - Highway Maintainer III, District 6

Joshua Lafond - Business Systems Analyst I, Commissioner’s Office
Michael Pickett - Highway Maintainer III, District 1
Henry Sliwerski - Highway Maintainer III, Turnpikes
Desislava Pomeroy - Civil Engineer IV, District 2
Gary Springs - Business Systems Analyst I, Commissioner’s Office
Jeremy Bebey - Assist. Highway Patrol Foreman, District 4
Elizabeth Mcavoy - Toll Shift Supervisor, Turnpikes
Derek Bolduc - Highway Maintainer III, District 3
Samantha Fauteux - Internal Auditor I, Turnpikes
Arvid Bacon - Highway Patrol Foreman, Turnpikes
Wayne Garland - Assist. Highway Patrol Foreman, District 6

Retirees: (Years of Service)
- James Kuntz - Turnpikes (39)
- Deborah Weil - Finance (35)
- Maurice Cere - Turnpikes (32)
- Scotty Eldridge - District 3 (32)
- Richard Davis - District 4 (30)
- Kenneth Crowther - District 1 (26)
- Norman Howcroft - District 6 (25)
- Deborah Housel - Turnpikes (21)
- Edward Tibbets - District 1 (19)
- Michael Thompson - District 1 (19)
- Raymond Shepardson - District 2 (18)
- Gary Wallace - Turnpikes (17)
- Robert Daneau - Turnpikes (14)
- Frank Desjardins - Mechanical Services (12)
- Mark Hollis - District 2 (11)
Editor’s note: This letter was sent to the Traffic Bureau.

December 1, 2018

On behalf of the Building and Grounds Committee and our project coordinator, thank you so much for your assistance in getting our traffic lights in place. Parishioners have expressed their delight in how quickly cars respond to the blinking lights and stop! It is so much safer, for our elderly especially. Thank you so much for your help.

Sally Steere
All Saints Church
Peterborough, NH

Editor’s note: This message was sent to Keith Cota, Project Manager for the Spaulding Turnpike improvement project in Dover and Newington.

December 16, 2018

I walked around the site of the Rte. 16 project Saturday beside Pomeroy cove, Wentworth Terrace, and Hilton Park. Your guys have done a remarkable job keeping the area safe and clean. The quality of the work appears second to none. My Mother and neighbors tell me your people have been very respectful to the residents as well. Thank you so much!!

Chip Kelley
Harbour Capital Corporation

Editor’s note: This note was sent to State Highway Engineer Caleb Dobbins.

Thanks so very much for sharing your expertise with the de-icing conference participants in Burlington a few weeks ago. Your examples and anecdotes were easy to follow/understand, making them very meaningful for everyone. Thanks for helping a neighboring state get up to speed on what you know so well in NH!

Kris Stepanick
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT

December 18, 2018

I ran out of gas on I-95. Chris saw me with a police officer and my hood up. The officer wanted me to pay a tow company to bring me fuel, but Chris was able to give me gas on the spot for free. He stopped and had to get his vehicle across the busy highway over to me on the median. He was INCREDIBLY kind and helpful. I wish EVERYONE I dealt with was as good as him!

Rep. Ellen Read
Newmarket, NH

Editor’s Note: “Chris” in the above note is Chris Tsoukalas, who works the Turnpike Bureau Safety Patrol.

January 3, 2019

I wanted to reach out to let you know how impressed I am with your road crews. I had to travel very early on New Year’s day (4:00 a.m.) to take my daughter to the airport in Boston to head back to college. While the weather was terrible, the road crew were out and about and doing a wonderful job in very difficult conditions. I was, slowly, able to make it to Boston without problem. The plow and salt and sand drivers should be congratulated on all of their hard work.

Susie Weider
Thetford, VT

October 11, 2018

Just want to personally thank the Memorial Bridge staff for a very quick opening after our rudder stuck and cable jumped, and we lost steering on our sailboat when we were less than 50 feet away from the bridge in a raging current. Our mast was 30 seconds away from striking the bridge. They got it lifted quicker than I thought possible. We anchored on the other side after the current carried us through the opening backwards. This could have been disastrous, but just a few bumps and bruises and we made it back out the river.

Julie Anne
Portsmouth, NH
Operation “Santa Claus” puts Welcome Gifts Under Christmas Trees

After nearly six decades, “Operation Santa Claus” just keeps rolling along. The annual statewide effort by the State Employees Association (SEA/SEIU Local 1984) to bring holiday cheer to kids across New Hampshire has grown from gifts for 14 children in 1960 to as many as 3,000 today. This year the NHDOT sponsored a total of 128 kids.

One Bureau that really goes above and beyond every year is Mechanical Services. Administrative Secretary Jodi Sottilaro shares some thought on their year-round effort.

“This all begins in January and goes until December. We have special events like lottery ticket raffles every few months. In the cold frigid winter months we offer homemade soups to employees for a fee, we call it “Soup Friday.” During the summer months, we have “Payday Lunch,” Around the holidays we hold bake sales. All of the food we prepare is our donation and all the money we collect goes into the Operation Santa Fund. We raise about $3,000 annually and buy gifts for 30 kids at $100 per child. It takes a lot of work to raise the money, do the shopping, bag up the gifts, obtain the raffle prizes, sell the tickets and organize the events. We have extremely generous employees who put their heart and souls into this endeavor. We are so appreciative of all the efforts that go into this wonderful and worthwhile cause. Most of these children have had it rough for one reason or another so this is our way of making their holiday just a little bit brighter. Thank you to the DOT employees and their families who participate in this!”

Popsicle Stick Bridges Take a Licking

A new record was set by a team from Concord High School at the annual Transportation and Civil Engineering (TRAC) bridge building competition on November 27th. The design of a King Post style popsicle stick bridge withstood a load of 385 lbs! A total of 16 teams participated in the event.

TRAC is a hands-on education program designed for integration into science, math and social science classes. NHDOT engineer Ron Kleiner coached the Concord High School teams.

Anabelle Watson (left), daughter of Bill Watson (Planning & Community Assistance) was among the competitors at this year’s NHDOT TRAC popsicle stick bridge competition. She is pictured with Bishop Brady teammate Chantalle Gagnon.

Cover photo: District 5’s #528 Patrol Section in Derry is awarded the “Safe and Sustainable Snowfighting Award” by the Salt Institute for best practices.