



Trends and Transitions: April 2011



Safety's No Accident

The first full week of April is National Public Health Week, dedicated this year to raising awareness about simple steps people can take to avoid injuries in all areas of life. Injuries from falls, car crashes, prescription drug overdoses, domestic violence and suicide attempts account for about 12 percent of all medical spending, according to the American Public Health Association. State budgets share this financial burden through Medicaid, child welfare services, state employee health benefits, health care for the uninsured, and lost tax revenue from the injured and their caregivers.

Certain precautions are effective in preventing injuries. For example, children can reduce their risk of brain injuries by more than 85 percent by wearing helmets while riding bikes.

Properly using safety seats reduces the risk of children dying from a car crash by 71 percent.

State lawmakers have supported efforts to educate people on how to prevent injuries and avoid risky behaviors, and have passed laws requiring certain actions.

- ▶ All states except New Hampshire require some type of seat belt use.
- ▶ All 50 states have some type of child restraint law.
- ▶ At least 30 states ban all drivers from texting.
- ▶ Twenty states require all motorcyclists to wear helmets.
- ▶ Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia require certain children to wear bicycle helmets.
- ▶ Thirty-eight states have prescription drug monitoring programs to help physicians and pharmacists track medications for controlled substances.
- ▶ At least 14 states have laws that urge or require school boards to develop curriculum on teen dating violence.
- ▶ Seven states appropriate money to research, plan and develop ways to prevent falls by the elderly.
- ▶ Eleven states require the state education department to provide a youth suicide prevention curriculum.

These Streets Are Made for Walkin'

Over the last decade, it's become a lot safer to walk or ride your bike. Even as walking and bicycling trips increased by about 25 percent, bicycle and pedestrian traffic fatalities declined by 6 percent and 16 percent, respectively. Trips by foot and bike now make up 12 percent of all trips. For bicyclists and pedestrians, there is safety in numbers. The more bicyclists and walkers on the streets, the more attuned drivers are to their presence, according to studies in Portland and New York City.

Delaware and Vermont passed legislation last year strengthening penalties for motorists who are involved in accidents with

"vulnerable users" of the roadway (pedestrians, highway workers, equestrians, bicyclists, skateboarders or scooter riders). Connecticut, Oregon and Washington are considering similar bills this year.

Hawaii and New Jersey are focusing on education, street design and innovative enforcement tactics to protect older pedestrians. Police officers pose as "decoy" pedestrians in marked crosswalks; if motorists fail to stop, they are issued warnings or tickets.

In 26 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, "complete streets" policies require a focus on all transportation users—including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and older adults—when planning transportation projects. So far this year, lawmakers in Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, New York, Washington and West Virginia have introduced complete streets legislation.

As the popularity of biking and walking increases, safety becomes even more important. A recent report from the Governors Highway Safety Association shows a slight uptick—0.4 percent—in pedestrian deaths during the first half of 2010, the first increase in four years.

Can Technology Save Money?

Information technology is vital to delivering government services, and states are looking for ways to use it to reduce costs.

Consolidation is the No. 1 step taken by state IT directors to control costs, says Doug Robinson, director of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers. In 2010, Utah consolidated 35 data centers into two and reduced government-run servers from 1,864 to 591. State officials expect to save \$4 million or more a year, much of it as a result of lower energy consumption.

Standardizing common applications such as e-mail, messaging, calendaring, human resources and payroll across state agencies also can save money. New York plans to move all state employees soon to a single e-mail system to save \$4 million a year. Other states already have converted to common e-mail systems.

April Trends

- ▶ [Safety's No Accident](#)
- ▶ [The Well Being of Nation/States](#)
- ▶ [These Streets Are Made for Walkin'](#)
- ▶ [Can Technology Save Money?](#)

Online

- ▶ [See the Economist magazine's full list ranking states against other countries based on the health, education and wealth of their citizens.](#)
- ▶ [State Legislatures Magazine home page](#)
- ▶ [Subscribe to State Legislatures Magazine](#)

Print Friendly

The Well Being of Nation/States

The United Nations' Development Programme recently ranked countries based on the life expectancy, level of education, and standard of living of their citizens. The American Human Development Project similarly ranks states. Since several states have populations and economies as big or bigger than a lot of countries, The Economist magazine decided to merge the two indices to see where states would rank if they were countries. The Top 20 countries or states are:

- ▶ Norway
- ▶ Germany
- ▶ Connecticut
- ▶ New York
- ▶ Sweden
- ▶ Wyoming
- ▶ California
- ▶ Illinois
- ▶ Florida
- ▶ Australia
- ▶ Switzerland
- ▶ Canada
- ▶ Japan
- ▶ Ohio
- ▶ Texas
- ▶ Denmark
- ▶ Netherlands
- ▶ Czech Republic
- ▶ New Zealand
- ▶ Kentucky

move all state employees soon to a single e-mail system to save \$4 million a year. Other states already have converted to common e-mail systems.

A 2010 publication by Tech America highlighted several other recent state initiatives to reduce costs and improve efficiency:

- ▶ Massachusetts centralized IT operations in the executive branch, which involved more than 150 state agencies, 200 phone systems, 15 data networks, 183 data centers and 24 e-mail systems.
- ▶ Ohio consolidated business processes, previously handled by individual state agencies, into a single division and standardized accounts payable, invoice processing, travel reimbursement, etc.
- ▶ Utah integrated how eligibility and benefits are determined for more than 60 social service programs, improving caseworkers' productivity with online verification of an applicant's address, work history and assets.

Governments also are using predictive technologies to identify fraud and make better informed decisions. New York saved nearly \$889 million over five years by using business intelligence software to identify false tax refunds. North Carolina expects to recover millions of dollars annually by using IT analytics to flag and prevent case of Medicaid fraud and waste.

Cloud computing—where services and storage are provided over the Internet—also is expected to deliver savings. It allows users to procure only the services they need from a third party, eliminating the need for government agencies to purchase, maintain and upgrade their own servers and software. California, Minnesota and Utah—as well as New York City and Los Angeles—have contracted for e-mail and online collaboration services via the cloud. Los Angeles expects to save more than \$1 million in hard costs and \$20 million more through increased productivity, according to the city's chief technology officer, Randi Levin.

The federal government, too, could save about \$23 billion by reducing IT overhead, consolidating data centers, eliminating redundant networks and standardizing applications, according to a recent report by the Technology CEO Council. The report points out that new technology has the potential to make government more productive and able to support innovations that can generate economic growth and jobs, dramatically reduce spending and improve services to citizens.

Denver Office

Tel: 303-364-7700 | Fax: 303-364-7800 | 7700 East First Place |
Denver, CO 80230

Washington Office

Tel: 202-624-5400 | Fax: 202-737-1069 | 444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 515 |
Washington, D.C. 20001

©2013 National Conference of State Legislatures. All Rights Reserved.