

Think of it as Daylight *Safety Time*

Setting our clocks an hour ahead next week may seem like an early start to the spring, but it also marks a time of extra safety concerns in the form of groggy workers and dark morning hours

Daylight saving time begins Sunday, March 8, 2009, and it starts a particularly difficult time of year for Bob Eubanks of Leesburg, Florida. It was 14 years ago that Eubanks' 15-year-old son, Jonathan, was struck and killed by a pickup truck as he waited alone in the dark for his school bus.

"I just tense up every year when this time comes around," Eubanks told the *Orlando Sentinel*. "The early morning is so dangerous. I think they ought to have a light at every bus stop where you have to wait at that time of the morning."

After his son's death, Eubanks ran a campaign to educate parents and other drivers. Children, he said, take it for granted that motorists can see them if a car's headlights are on. Meanwhile, drivers aren't used to having children out before daylight. Eubanks said kids should stay at least 5 feet from the road and walk against traffic.

"We tell parents never, ever take safety for granted," Eubanks told the *Sentinel*.

Your workers—particularly those who walk to train or bus stations—face similar dangers with the advent of daylight saving time, and they could no doubt benefit from a reminder of those risks.

But if daylight saving time is dangerous, why has it been adopted by so many countries around the world?

The concept of daylight saving time is often attributed to Benjamin Franklin, who coined the adage, "Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." The *Wikipedia* website states that, while living in Paris, Franklin published a letter suggesting that Parisians economize on candles by rising earlier to use morning sunlight. The 1784 satire proposed taxing shutters, rationing candles, and waking the public by ringing church bells and firing cannons at sunrise.

Daylight saving time has been in use in the U.S. and many European countries since World War I. The main purpose of daylight saving time (called "Summer Time" in many places in the world) is to make better use of daylight. We change our clocks during the summer months to move an hour of daylight from the morning to the evening.

Although it has since been disputed, a 1975 study by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) found that daylight saving time cuts back on the nation's energy use by about 1 percent each day because less electricity is used for lighting and appliances.

And, the sad case of Jonathan Eubanks notwithstanding, some studies in the U.S. and Great Britain have found that daylight saving time has public health benefits in that it actually decreases the number of traffic accidents. According to an article on the *WebExhibits* website, the studies found that the increase in accidents in the dark morning hours is offset by an evening decrease in accidents.

The end of daylight saving time (November 1, this year), however, has been found to lead to a significant increase in evening traffic accidents in the days and weeks immediately following the switch. Walkers are three times more likely to be hit and killed by cars right after the switch than in the month before daylight saving time ends.

Keep in mind that, come Monday morning, many of your employees will be reporting to work with an hour less sleep under their belts. And, while that may not seem like a big deal, consider a study by the National Sleep Foundation that found in a recent year:

- 40% of adults have been sleepy enough during the day that it interferes with their daily activities.
- 18% have this kind of sleepiness at least a few days a week.
- 62% drove while feeling drowsy.
- 27% have dozed off, if only for a few seconds, while driving.
- 23% know someone who had an auto accident due to falling asleep at the wheel.