

HEALTH REPORT

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CALLS FOR COMPULSORY FIRST AID COURSES FOR ALL LEARNER DRIVERS

St John Ambulance Australia is calling for first aid courses to be made compulsory for all learner drivers following a series of high profile P-plater and learner drive road fatalities.

The organisation says this is essential given new research which has found that only seven percent of Australians feel very confident in administering first aid at serious road accidents where people are injured.

The findings have been released today in the latest issue of the Pfizer Health Report, jointly produced with St John Ambulance Australia.

"On average five people die on Australian roads each day¹. As with any serious accident the first few minutes are crucial and the key to saving more lives is to ensure more bystanders and witnesses are equipped with the skills to help others. When it comes to car accidents, often the first on the scene will be another driver," says Len Fiori, CEO of St John Ambulance Australia.

Road crashes are the biggest killer of people aged between 18 and 25 years².

"It is scary to think that we can put young adults on the road equipped with the skills to drive but not with the knowledge to know what to do in an accident. Simple things like knowing how to put people in the recovery position and conducting CPR should be common knowledge for all people using our roads," said Len Fiori.

"In the coming months we will be lobbying the government to put forward this vital case. If we can get all young drivers to complete a first aid course as part of their license requirements we will effectively be saving lives," Len Fiori continued.

The national first aid study also found that around one in six Australians have performed first aid when someone appeared to be having sudden cardiac arrest, collapsed with severe bleeding, drowned or was injured in a serious road accident.

While 83 percent of Australians feel that everyone should know how to perform first aid, just over one in ten say they have been in a situation where someone else has required first aid but they did not have the skills to assist.

Alarming though, confidence levels in implementing first aid skills are low, with only six percent claiming to be extremely confident in performing first aid skills learned.



Unfortunately this is not surprising when 41 percent of those who have attended first aid courses last did so ten years ago or more, as opposed to 11 percent who attended courses in the past three years.

"For those who have attended first aid courses, it is extremely important that they attend CPR refresher courses every year and first aid refresher courses every three years so they are not only updated on new techniques but are also able implement the skills they learn in a controlled environment. Practising CPR on a dummy is a lot easier than being confronted with a real life emergency situation where someone's life is in your hands," said Len Fiori.

A positive finding of this month's Pfizer Health Report revealed that just over two thirds of Australian households have a first aid kit, forty six percent having a home-assembled kit.

"It is essential for all homes to have a first aid kit on hand for all emergency situations. St John Ambulance Australia sells a range of kits for the home, office, car and other domestic and industrial situations, but even self-assembled kits are good to have as long as they are regularly checked and stocked with sterile supplies," said Len Fiori.

Other key findings of this month's Pfizer Health Report include:

- 73 percent of Australians consider learning first aid as important as learning to swim, and 17 percent more important than learning to swim
- Close to one in five (17 percent) have done some first aid training in the past year
- 18 percent of those who have attended a course indicated that they have been trained / retrained in the new CPR procedure effective from 3 March 2006
- Australians living in regional areas are much more likely than those living in metropolitan areas to feel confident in first aid skills

St John Ambulance Australia has collaborated with Pfizer Australia to assist with educating the public about first aid produce this month's edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report. Filled with useful information, free copies can be requested by phoning **1800 675 229** or by visiting www.healthreport.com.au where people can also sign-up for email alerts of future editions.

Findings are based on responses from 1,460 Australians aged 18 years and over. The research was conducted in November 2006 by independent consultants Stollznow Research.

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NB: INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE WITH ST JOHN AMBULANCE CEO LEN FIORI

**For more information please contact Hausmann Communications:
Alexis Bicknell on (02) 8353 5731 or 0400 161 598
Linda Reid on (02) 8353 5745 or 0417 800 996**

¹http://www.openroad.com.au/safety_roadtoll.asp

² http://www.aaa.asn.au/saferroads/get_the_facts.asp