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Dear Client:

**Which occupations have more auto accidents? A study of more than one million vehicle accidents in the US reveals some interesting information about Austin drivers.**

The number one category is not a surprise. And it may explain why we see so many car wrecks on Austin area roadways. The Number One category for accidents is way ahead of all others. **Students have 152 accidents per 1,000 insured drivers.**

UTAustin has one of the largest student populations of any single-campus institution in the nation. And we have six other colleges and universities in our area, bringing the **total number of students (who almost all have cars) to well beyond the 100,000 mark.** If this isn't enough, there are 25 colleges and universities within a 100-mile radius of Austin, where the cry of "road trip" much of the time means a quick **pile-in-the-car to go party in Austin.**

But let's not put all of the blame for car wrecks on students (even though you're probably thinking, "yeah, I did drive more recklessly when I was a student, but, what they heck, I've grown up a lot since then!"). Wanna bet? Your upstanding **professions that require enough brains to get advanced degrees** round out the Top Three in number of auto accidents.

Number two on the list are – ta-dahh — **medical doctors**, with 109 accidents per 1,000 insured drivers. Yes, and right behind them are **attorneys**, with 106 car wrecks per 1,000 insured drivers. **Architects** rank number four (105 wrecks/1,000 drivers) and **real estate agents** round out the Top Five (102/1,000).

This nationwide study was conducted by San Francisco-based Quality Planning Corp. And it contains some additional information that could be a wake-up call if you've ever talked on your cell phone while driving. Yes, you. **There is growing evidence that cell phones make drivers more accident-prone.** A study by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis found that drivers talking on cell phones account for 6% of US car accidents each year.

Many municipalities and some states have already **passed laws restricting talking on a cell phone** while driving. Just as importantly, judgments are being levied against companies whose employees, while talking on a cell phone, are involved in accidents where someone dies.

**As gasoline prices dip downward, it's interesting to note there are Texans, and places in Texas, not all that thrilled to see the drop in the price per gallon.**

Oil prices have suffered their steepest reversal in 16 years. While welcome to many motorists, the **lower price per gallon is causing a little concern among some in the Lone Star State**, even though the price is still robust enough to satisfy them. Who are we talking about? We're referencing those individuals and companies in the "awl bidness" and those regional Texas economies whose economic destinies rise and fall with the price of a barrel of oil.

**Talk to an oilman in Texas and if they're candid with you, they'll tell you they are minting money.** Many are re-investing as much as they can to expand their holdings. The oilman is just like the farmer. The pendulum swings back and forth and they've learned to take advantage of the upswing, if at all possible. They know that bad times follow the good times. And they've been through some really bad times in Texas.

But today, for instance, if you drop in on one longtime family-run oil business in Dallas, you'll find **conference tables and walls of their plush offices covered with maps** with push-pins and Magic Markers pinpointing the wells they have under contract and those they are drilling as fast as they can.

In fact, take a look at the cities and regions where the oil and gas business is the bedrock of their economies. **Do you know which metro area has the lowest unemployment in Texas? Surprise! It's Midland**, with a 4.0% unemployment percentage in July 2006. Number Two in Texas is Amarillo, with a 4.3% unemployment. Those metro areas have suffered mightily in the past. Now they're invigorated. Yes, even Abilene and Odessa, at 4.7%, are feeling a boost.

The Austin-Round Rock metro is doing quite well, thank you, with 4.4% unemployment to rank #3 in Texas – but we've been among the best in the state for some time, due to the diversity of our economy (from high tech, to services, to government). **Now Midland and Amarillo are actually faring better at keeping the highest percentage of their residents gainfully employed.**

For some reason, all this reminds us of an iconoclastic Texas oilman, **Eddie Chiles**, who ended his TV commercials by saying something like **"If You Don't Have An Oil Well, Go Get You One!"** Chiles was also famous for his self-funded radio rants against the federal government and its regulations. The radio spots started with him saying, "I'm Eddie Chiles and I'm mad!" One of his memorable phrases urged the federal government to **"deliver our mail, defend our shores and leave us the hell alone."** Then he circulated additional bumper stickers that said simply, **"I'm mad too, Eddie!"** Born in Itasca, Texas, Eddie Chiles died in 1993. He became famous during one of the cyclical oil and gas booms in Texas when he earned enough dollars to buy self-promotional ads. Another Eddie Chiles has yet to surface in *this* boom.

**If you track airline fares, you know the rates keep popping up and down, depending upon the load factor, almost as rapidly as popcorn that is about ready to serve.**

Air carriers have always tried to be as nimble as possible in their highly-competitive business. The ticket booking systems have become so sophisticated, **airlines can literally raise and lower fares hour-by-hour** as they assess how many seats have been sold on any given flight. This is why it's rare for the person seated next to you to have paid what you paid for your ticket.

This capability has now resulted in air carriers shifting different size planes, and adding or eliminating flights, much more rapidly than they have in the past. You may recall that not long ago, while the airlines were struggling with the post-9/11 slowdown in air travel, many of the carriers started downsizing their aircraft – **using smaller Regional Jets on certain routes** because the seat demand had diminished considerably. This resulted in immediate savings for the airlines, even though the smaller aircraft were less comfortable for their passengers.

But, now, air travel has bounced back strongly. Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) passenger volume, for instance, is up 8% over 2005. **Monthly traffic records have been set in each of the past nine months.** From January to July 2006, 4.8 million passengers have gone through ABIA. It's a busy air travel time. For a long time now, we've advised you to always check which equipment is being used on the flight you book, especially if wider seats and more leg room are important to you. Now, you have another – more positive – reason to continue to check which equipment is being used on your flight.

The airlines have recognized this surge in passengers going to and from Austin and they have responded by **increasing the size of their planes on certain Austin routes.** A lumbering, 216-seat, 757-300 aircraft barely reaches altitude on a flight between Austin and Houston before it has to drop back down to land.

But the passenger demand for the 7 am Continental Airlines flight to Houston has increased so much, the carrier, starting 9/16/06, will use the **757-300 on four flights a week between Austin and Houston.** The 757-300, normally used on cross-country hops, is replacing a 167-seat 737.

American Airlines later this year will upgrade two of its "Nerd Bird" non-stop flights from Austin to San Jose, **replacing 136-seat MD80s with 188-seat Boeing 757s.** Southwest, by the way, has only one model aircraft for its entire fleet, so it does not have the capability to increase plane size on busy routes.

**Further, air carriers are adding more and more flights to serve Austin.** This month, United added a third daily nonstop to Washington Dulles and a fifth nonstop to Denver. Next month, Frontier adds a fourth daily nonstop to Denver. But back to our original point, if size matters, be sure to check the equipment allocated to your next flight.

**Multi-tasking is a habit you strive for – to be more effective, to accomplish more, to be more productive? Right? Not necessarily. In today’s email world, it could result in problems.**

*The Wall Street Journal* reports a harried CEO of a marketing company was composing an email to four of his senior staff about the need to fire a fifth executive, while he was talking on the phone with his travel agent about booking a vacation to Mexico. When he hit “Send,” he realized the **confidential message was sent to the about-to-fired staffer**, so he told the travel agent to finish the arrangements while he scrambled to undo his email mistake.

Too late. He got an **angry R-rated email back** from the canned employee and, to top it off, when he got to Mexico for a much-needed R&R time-off, he learned his travel agent booked him into the \$3,000/night presidential suite.

**What now passes for multi-tasking was once called *not paying attention*.** “Multitasking doesn’t look to be one of the great strengths of human cognition,” says **James C. Johnston**, a research psychologist at NASA’s Ames Research Center. “It’s almost inevitable that each individual task will be slower and of lower quality.”

A major multitasking illusion: that you can multitask while communicating. The problems that can occur “**when your mouth is moving, but your brain is elsewhere**” are exacerbated tremendously by the little “Reply to All” button at the top of your email message. It’s not pretty when the recipient is unintended, or worse, when you have said something about that person in the email.

Someone should write a book about all the problems occurred while multitasking. It could be a best-selling black humor volume. My personal favorite story is about the marketing exec stretched so thinly that he sent **4,000 nuns a direct mail letter addressed “Dear Mr. Sister.”**

When reminded that P. T. Barnum once said you could fool some of the people all of the time, **Dr. Louis Overholster** noted that “some outfits call that their customer list!”

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