Public Access to Health Information
Road Accidents and Safety
Road Accidents as a Health Problem

- Road accidents are currently ranked as the 9th largest health problem globally.
- If current trends continue they could be the 3rd largest problem by 2020.
- Each year an estimated 1.2 million people are killed and 50 million injured worldwide.
- It is a particularly bad problem in the developing world, which has the highest rates of accidents and deaths.
- The estimated total cost in developing countries is US $65 billion per year.
Number of deaths from traffic in 2002 (per 100,000 persons)
Case study: Kenya

• More than 3000 people die each year in road accidents in Kenya with many more seriously injured.

• Matatus (private minibuses) are often to blame
  – Poorly maintained vehicles
  – Overloading
  – Reckless drivers.

• An information campaign (using stickers with a simple message encouraging passengers to speak out) reduced accidents by 50% where it was used.
Information campaigns

• Information can be used to target
  – Drivers
  – Pedestrians
  – Animal keepers

• encouraging them to think about safety.

• Authorities responsible for roads, public service vehicles (such as buses), and freight transport, can be encouraged to introduce measures for better safety and enforce existing regulations.
Drivers

• Drivers need to be reminded of the dangers of
  – Carelessness
  – Excessive speed
  – Driving under the influence of drink or drugs
  – Not maintaining their vehicles properly
  – Using cell phones while driving
Pedestrians

• Pedestrians need awareness of
  – How to walk along roads and cross safely
  – The importance of keeping animals under control on or near roads
  – Training children how to behave on the roads.
The importance of information

- Some countries (chiefly in Western Europe) have succeeded in bringing down accident and fatality rates each year.
- This is done by a combination of various measures
  - Road maintenance and improvements
  - Better vehicle safety features
  - Strict policing of traffic laws
  - Making sure that people understand safety and know how to behave on the roads
- This last aspect is done through good information and may be the most important part of the whole package of measures.
What Libraries can do

• Collect and make available material on road safety

• Get involved with safety campaigns by
  – Displaying posters
  – Making library premises available for training and awareness sessions for drivers and pedestrians

• Partner with government and NGO campaigns on safety

• Work with children on road safety, through clubs which can teach safety drills, understanding road signs, first aid, etc.