

Local / State



Staff photo by Greg Gammon

Warnings printed on the side of cigarette packages advise smokers that 'smoking is dangerous to your health.' Respiratory problems are the main danger of cigarette smoking, but smoking can also be a contributing factor in auto accidents.

# Don't mix smoking, driving this weekend

"No smoking" should be added to the list of safe driving tips for the July 4th weekend, says a press release published by the American Lung Association.

"Smoking in automobiles not only affects the well-being of the smoker and others in the car, it can cause accidents," said Dr. Stanton P. Fischer, ALAT president.

A nationwide survey by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicates at least 60,000 motor vehicle fires a year are caused by smoking, Fischer said. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's fire administration says smoking is the seventh leading cause of automobile fires.

"Although no one knows how many of the smoking-ignited car fires result in death or injury, anyone who has experienced a small fire — or a cigarette burn — while riding in a car understands the fear and panic which result," Fischer said.

Smoking also has caused accidents when the driver looks away from the road to light up, to retrieve a fallen cigarette or to brush ash off clothing. In addition, many pulmonary surgeons say nonsmokers have a better chance of recovering from chest injuries suffered in automobile accidents.

Smoking 10 cigarettes in an enclosed car produces carbon monoxide levels up to 90 ppm in the shared air, and doubles the carbon monoxide levels in the blood of both smokers and nonsmokers, according to the ALAT. Carbon monoxide forces oxygen out of the red blood cells and deprives the body and brain of this life-sustaining substance.

With these levels of carbon monoxide, some people — including drivers — cannot distinguish between relative brightness, lose some ability to judge time intervals and take longer to respond to flashing taillights. They also show impaired performance on some psychomotor tests.

For those with chronic heart and lung disease, the elevated carbon monoxide and resulting lack of oxygen may mean dangerous physical stress.

"Smokers who find it difficult to ride without smoking can resist the urge with simple deep breathing and other exercises," Fischer said.

Eliminating the least necessary cigarettes is the first step to freedom from smoking, Fischer said. Not smoking in the car increases the chances of a safe 4th of July and could be the beginning of independence from smoking.

## Minicomputer use puts load on TEES

The growing use of minicomputers is increasing the workload of giant, more sophisticated computers like the two owned by Texas Engineering Experiment Station (TEES) and used by agencies throughout the state.

Dr. Dick B. Simmons, director of the Data Processing Center, located on the Texas A&M campus, encourages agencies and departments contracting with his center to buy their own small computers. In the long run, it will do more work for the bigger machines.

"They become computerized and discover more and more jobs the computer can do," he said. "They also discover that their minicomputers cannot do all they need to do," he said.

The center has a staff of 160, including 52 computing science professionals who operate two Amdahl 470 computer systems with a primary mission to meet the needs of the University.

More than 50 percent of the center's work is done for state agencies and universities from Alpine to Amarillo through telephone lines. The work amounts to more than \$10,000 annually, Simmons said.

Many of the state agency's customers could use free computer services on other equipment or buy their own, but don't, he said.

The cost of hardware is very high, Simmons explained. "The problem is software. They come to us for our experience and expertise," he said.

The staff develops and maintains software for customers. Remote job entry — work done over telephone lines — is performed for institutions including the University of Texas at Tyler, Sul Ross State University in Alpine and the Texas State Technical Institute in Waco. The Red River State Depot in Texarkana also is a customer.

Simmons said record-keeping and other administrative work also is done for several state agencies including the Texas Industrial Commission, Texas Youth Council and the State Auditor's Office.

Other hours in the center's 24-hour work load are filled with academic, research and administrative needs of the University and the Texas A&M University System of which TEES is a branch.

Approximately 800 terminals can be active at one time. There are between 150 and 200 other computers, from micros to large-scale models, along with about 1,600 terminals of various types that tie into the main computer system via telephone or specially designated communication lines.

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**"CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR!"**

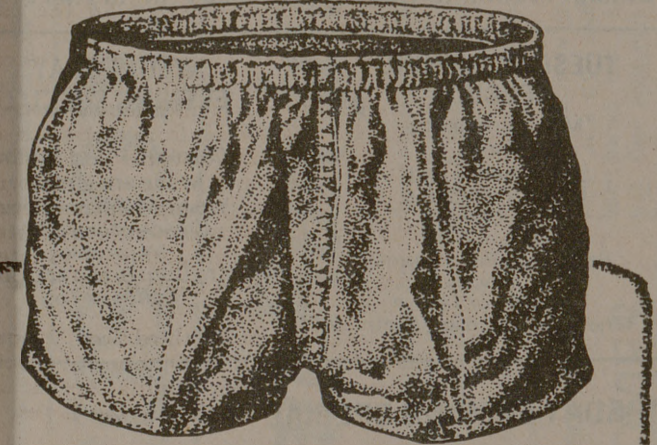
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