

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Analysis of Crash Complete

Oregon State Police say that Kyle Charles Ross, David John Bergin and Jonathan Marshall Thibeault, all 18, died when Ross lost control of his 1994 BMW 740 sedan while traveling an estimated 80 mph on Highway 238 in the early morning hours of June 20. The teens reportedly had been camping and swimming with friends.

Source: [mailtribune.com](http://mailtribune.com) ♦

## Lessons Learned

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors in crashes. Thirty percent of all fatal crashes are caused by speeding. In 1999, over 700,000 people were injured nationwide as a result of speeding. Speeding affects the way the driver handles the car because it prevents the driver from being able to control the car around curves and bends. It increases braking distance. It also increases the distance that the car travels before the driver can react to a dangerous situation.

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Have you ever wondered what happens inside a car when it crashes? People at crash test labs have found that in each car crash there are actually three collisions:

1. The car's collision
2. The human collision
3. The human body's collision

During a crash, the car crushes, absorbing some of the force of the collision. At 30 mph, a car hitting an object that is not moving will crumple in about two feet.

The second collision is the human collision. At the moment of impact, driver and passengers in the car are still traveling at the vehicle's original speed. When the car comes to a complete stop the passengers continue to be hurled forward until they come in contact with some part of the automobile, such as the steering wheel, the dashboard and the front window or the back of the front seat. Humans in a crash can also cause serious injuries to other humans when they collide with each other. Rear-seat passengers often hit people in the front seat of a car as they fly forward.

In a crash, even after a human body comes to a complete stop, its internal organs are still moving. These internal organs slam into other organs of the skeletal system. This internal collision is what often causes serious injury or death. Imagine what happens when someone's head collides with the windshield of a car. After the person stops moving, the brain hits the inside of the skull. The result may be only a mild concussion, or there could be permanent brain damage.

## Unbelted Teen Killed in Crash

Missouri teen Charles "Charlie" J. Glik, 16, was driving at about 3 a.m. when his car left the roadway and struck a utility pole, police said. The impact snapped the pole in half, and Charlie, who was not wearing his seat belt, died at the scene.

Source: *stltoday.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

In 28 of the states with belt use laws in 2004, the law specified secondary enforcement. That is, police officers are permitted to write a citation only after a vehicle is stopped for some other traffic infraction.

As of December 2004, 49 states and the District of Columbia had belt use laws in effect. The laws differ from state to state, according to the type and age of the vehicle, occupant seating position, etc.

Research has found that lap/shoulder safety belts, when used, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, safety belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and moderate-to-critical injury by 65 percent.

Among passenger vehicle occupants over 4 years old, safety belts saved an estimated 15,434 lives in 2004.

Ejection from the vehicle is one of the most injurious events that can happen to a person in a crash. In fatal crashes, 74% of passenger car occupants who were totally ejected from the vehicle were killed. Safety belts are effective in preventing total ejections. Only 1% of the occupants reported that were using restraints were totally ejected, compared with 29% of the unrestrained occupants.

Wear your safety belt and shoulder harness properly. In a crash, you are far more likely to be killed if you are not wearing a safety belt. Wearing shoulder belts and lap belts make your chances of living through a crash twice as good.

If you are involved in a crash, your seat belt will keep you from being thrown from your vehicle. If you are thrown from your vehicle in the crash, your risk of death is five times greater.

Seat belts keep you from being thrown against others in the vehicle. Seat belts also keep you from being thrown against parts of your vehicle, such as the steering wheel or windshield. They keep the driver behind the wheel, where he or she can control the vehicle.

Wear a shoulder belt only with a lap belt. Wear your safety belt every time you get in your vehicle, not just for long trips or on high-speed highways. More than half of the crashes that cause injury or death happen at speeds less than 40 mph and within 25 miles from home.

One important thing to remember is that the greater the speed and mass, the more energy and force is created. No vehicle can protect people from every crash situation, even with all the safety restraint systems in use. Speed is a major factor in how much energy the vehicle can absorb to protect the occupants.

Airbags, combined with lap/shoulder safety belts, offer the most effective safety protection available today for passenger vehicle occupants. Research indicates an overall fatality-reducing effectiveness for airbags of 11 percent when a safety belt is used in conjunction with the airbag. In 2004, an estimated 2,647 lives were saved by airbags.

Airbags are supplemental protection and are not designed to inflate in all crashes. Most are designed to deploy in a moderate-to-severe frontal crash. Airbag technology is improving to meet the specific needs of all occupant types.

All airbags must be used in combination with a safety belt. Remove any excess slack in the belt.



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## Teen Cited for Speeding after One-Car Crash

Police cited Massachusetts teen Richard Keenan, 19, for speeding and marked lanes violation after an 11:18 a.m. single-car crash, according to Sgt. Jim Bruce.

Keenan, who was driving a 2002 red Saturn, sustained minor injuries in the accident, said Bruce.

Source: *metrowestdailynews.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

In 2004, there were 6,181,000 car crashes in the United States, resulting in over 42,000 deaths and nearly three million injuries. In 2004, one person died in a motor vehicle collision every twelve minutes. Someone was injured every eleven seconds.

The economic cost nationwide of motor vehicle crashes in 2000 was \$230.6 billion – an average of \$820 for every person living in the United States. These costs include:

- \$33 billion in medical costs
- \$59 billion in property damage
- \$26 billion in travel delay costs
- \$81 billion in lost productivity

Costs are due in part to:

- impaired driving (\$51 billion)
- failure to use seat belts (\$26 billion)
- speeding (\$40 billion)

In 2004, speeding was a contributing factor in 29 percent of all fatal crashes that occurred on dry roads and in 34 percent of all fatal crashes that occurred on wet roads, and 13,192 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes.

Speeding was involved in one-third (31 percent) of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones. Eighty-six percent of speeding-related fatalities occurred on roads that were not interstate highways.

In a 2002 survey, the NHTSA found that speeding is a pervasive behavior, with about three-quarters of drivers in the survey reporting they drove over the speed limit on all types of roads within the past month.

Speeding reduces a driver's ability to steer safely around curves on the highway or avoid objects in the roadway. It extends the distance necessary to stop the vehicle, increases the distance a vehicle travels while a driver reacts, and reduces the effectiveness of the vehicle's safety features.

The faster the vehicle is traveling, the greater the impact if the vehicle does crash. Inversely, the effectiveness of restraint devices like airbags and safety belts and vehicular construction features such as crumple zones and side member beams decline as impact speed increases. The probability of a disfiguring or debilitating injury or death increases with higher speed on impact.

Always be prepared to adjust your speed for varying conditions and situations. Different traffic, roadway, and weather conditions can change the amount of time and space needed for slowing down while maintaining control of your vehicle.

Making a judgment about a traffic situation involves measuring, comparing, and evaluating. As you drive, you judge speed, time, space, distance, traction and visibility. You make judgments about your own driving performance as well as the action and performance of other drivers. Your own speed and the speed of other drivers will influence any decision you make.

When you have decided to decelerate or brake to reduce risk, you should have already considered the surface of the roadway. How hard or how fast you apply your brakes will vary with the speed of your car and the condition of the roadway.

The faster you drive, the more distance you will cover when you stop. At higher speeds, you will also have a more difficult time controlling your vehicle. Several things must be considered to determine the stopping distance, including your mental condition, physical condition, your vehicle, and road and weather conditions.

The posted speed limit may be too fast for night driving. Be sure to turn your headlights on as soon as the sun sets.

Overdriving your headlights is driving at a speed that makes your stopping distance longer than the distance illuminated by your headlights. This means that you will not be able to stop in time to avoid a possible hazard. The posted speed limit is too high for conditions if you are overdriving your headlights.



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## Teen Convicted of Vehicular Homicide

Colorado teen Rodrigo Rodriguez, 17, pleaded guilty to vehicular homicide caused by reckless driving and was convicted of driving while ability impaired by alcohol, a misdemeanor, in the Oct. 23 car crash that killed Patricia "Pat" Schnarr, 53.

Fourth Judicial District Judge David Shakes agreed to accept the sentence, three years in the Colorado Department of Corrections' Youthful Offender System — a program similar to boot camp that rehabilitates young offenders.

Source: *gazette.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Drinking alcoholic beverages and using other drugs is widely accepted in our society. Drinking and other drug use is often portrayed as glamorous and sophisticated in the media. Yet the use of alcohol and other drugs can be very costly when combined with driving. Many collisions involve drivers who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs; the costs include property damage, legal problems, injury and death.

Impaired driving means that the performance of critical driving tasks is reduced due to the effects of alcohol or other drugs. Impaired driving simply means that you are unable to drive as well as you could if you hadn't taken the substance. Impairment begins at the first intake of alcohol or other drugs and increases as a person's intake of alcohol or drugs increases.

Impaired drivers risk their lives and the lives of others. If you drink and drive, you could injure or kill someone in an alcohol-related collision even if you are not legally intoxicated. Your victim could be someone's mother, brother, spouse, best friend, or child. Others affected by crashes caused by impaired driving could include your own friends and family, police and emergency care workers at the scene, medical personnel at a hospital, and the court system. The emotional destruction of one impaired-driving collision could extend to people you would never have imagined would be affected. And, of course, the emotional consequences to you as the driver in that crash would be devastating as well.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that alcohol was involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes in 2004. The 16,694 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes in the US during 2004 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 31 minutes. An estimated 248,000 persons were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present — an average of one person injured every approximately every two minutes.

The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes is more than three times as high at night as during the day. For all crashes, the rate of alcohol involvement is five times as high at night. In 2004, 30 percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 51 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was five percent during the week and 12 percent during the weekend.

The effects of alcohol use vary from person to person even when the amount of alcohol used is equal. Though the effects and severity of the effects vary from person to person, alcohol affects everyone who uses it. The demands of the driving task are so great that every driver should be in the best condition possible. A driver cannot afford to increase the risks associated with driving by having his or her skills reduced by alcohol. Even the best drivers are affected if they drink alcohol.

When a person consumes alcohol, most of the alcohol is not digested. It is absorbed directly and quickly into the bloodstream through the lining of the stomach and small intestines. Once alcohol enters the bloodstream, it circulates to the brain. Since the absorption of alcohol begins as soon as drinking begins, it reaches the drinker's brain within minutes. Alcohol has the greatest effect on the parts of the brain that control judgment and reasoning, the most critical skills needed by drivers. Physical abilities become impaired soon after.

A driver affected by alcohol has a decreased ability to reason clearly and to make sound judgments. However, the driver may believe that thinking and judging abilities are sharper and quicker than usual. Some people believe that they can do things better after one or two drinks, but this belief is an error in judgment caused by the alcohol.

Alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the working of the nervous system. Thinking and judging abilities are duller and slower than usual.