

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

Volume 66, Issue 28

November 2006

Police Investigate Teen Car Accident

Police said Sean P. Mooney, 18, of Wysox, Pa., was driving at an unsafe speed when he lost control and his car skidded about 210 feet before rolling over into a ditch and finally coming to rest on the roof. Passenger Brandon M. Davis, 19, was not injured, passenger Christopher M. Travis, 19, suffered minor injuries, and Mooney was not injured in the crash.

Source: *Star-Gazette.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Exceeding the speed limit or driving too fast for conditions is a contributing factor in as many as one-third of all fatal crashes. In addition, many people are injured in speed-related collisions. More drivers are convicted of speeding than of any other offense. The safe speed is the one that allows you to have complete control of your vehicle.

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Published by the National Safety Commission
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Speed limit signs tell you the maximum limit allowed by law under ideal conditions. You are responsible for adjusting your driving speed to the road conditions.

Heavy rain reduces your ability to see and be seen. At times it may almost blind you. Reduce your speed.

Fog also reduces your ability to judge distance. Oncoming vehicles may be closer than you think. Be alert and be prepared to slow down.

Although expressways are built to keep traffic moving, conditions sometimes slow or halt the flow of traffic. One of these conditions is highway construction. Watch for warning signs that are in place ahead of the construction area. The closer you get to the construction area, the more you need to slow down. Be sure to obey all special speed limitations.

An expressway crash may block one or more lanes. When you see a problem ahead, check your mirrors for traffic behind you, flash your brake lights and slow down gradually. If you can go around the crash scene, proceed cautiously. Do not stop unless otherwise directed. Do not slow down to a crawl to look at the crash. You will only slow traffic and you could cause another crash.

The posted speed limit may be too fast for night driving. 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.

Teen Dies in Car Accident

Brittany Ellen Lindsey, 17, was cited for driving too fast for conditions after she crossed the centerline of the road she was driving on and collided with a school bus. Lindsey was trapped in her car for 20 minutes, conscious but with visible injuries, until she was cut out and taken to the hospital.

Source: news.mywebpal.com ♦

Lessons Learned

Remember that speed limits show the fastest speed you may drive under good conditions. You are responsible for adjusting your driving speed to the road conditions.

As the operator of a motor vehicle, you must know what a school zone and a school crossing sign looks like. School zones have signs, sometimes accompanied by a flashing yellow light, indicating the hours of enforcement in addition to the school zone speed limit. These speed limits are strictly enforced for the safety of children.

Children in school zones can be very unpredictable and the number of children present can create a confusing environment for drivers. Children may be walking, running and riding bicycles, scooters and skateboards. You may also see school crossing guards, vehicles driven by parents and school buses. Every child in a school zone is a human caution sign. When driving through a school zone, use extreme caution.

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. The risk of death, disfigurement, or debilitating injury doubles for every 10 mph over 50 mph that the vehicle travels. However, many drivers on the

road today do not view speeding as an immediate risk to their personal safety or the safety of others. To many drivers, driving a few miles over the speed limit is an acceptable risk.

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 is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. The economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is estimated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to be 40.4 billion dollars per year.

In 2004:

- speeding was a contributing factor in 30 percent of all fatal crashes, and 13,192 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes.
- speeding was a factor in 29 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred on dry roads in 2004 and in 34 percent of those that occurred on wet roads.
- 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.

Of all drivers that are involved in fatal crashes, young males are the most likely to be speeding. The older a driver is, the less likely that he or she will become involved in a speed-related crash.



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Wreck Kills Teen's Brother

Josh West, 16, died when the car driven by his 18-year-old brother went off the road. According to the Highway Patrol, Anthony was going about 75 mph, trying to pass two cars and a school bus on a double yellow line when he was met by an oncoming car. To avoid a head-on collision, Anthony went off the road into a yard where a boat was parked, and the boat trailer penetrated the car and hit Josh.

Source: *DunnDailyRecord.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Passing is one of the most dangerous things we do when we drive.

When you are driving on a two-lane road, observe any oncoming vehicles. If an oncoming vehicle is traveling on or near the centerline, slow down by removing your foot from the accelerator. Cover the brake pedal and move to your right. If you think you may need a way out of the situation, check the condition of the shoulder of the road.

Be very careful at night, and remember that the later at night it is, the more important it is to watch the oncoming traffic in case a driver is sleepy or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Before you decide to pass, make sure you are in a passing zone. Check for oncoming traffic that could interfere with your pass. Make sure you know how fast the vehicle is approaching. Check for vehicles ahead of the vehicle you want to pass. Look for vehicles that may be entering the highway from a side road, either to travel in the lane in which you are passing or attempting to enter the highway to travel in the lane to which you will be returning when you complete your pass. Check for vehicles that are following you or even in the process of passing you.

Stay a safe distance behind the vehicle you want to pass. The closer you get to the vehicle, the less you can see ahead. This is especially true when passing large vehicles.

Before you start to pass, communicate your intentions to other drivers by using your turn signal.

Complete your pass as quickly as possible; don't stay alongside the other vehicle.

After you pass, return to the right side of the roadway when you can see the headlights of the vehicle you just passed in your rearview mirror. Use your turn signal before you return to your lane.

When passing a bus or truck, be sure you can see the front of the vehicle in your rearview mirror before pulling in front of the vehicle.

On a level highway, it takes only three to five seconds longer to pass a truck than a car. On an upgrade, a truck often loses speed, so it is easier to pass than a car. On a downgrade, the truck's momentum will cause it to go faster, so you may need to increase your speed.

If a truck driver blinks the headlights after you pass, it's a signal that it is clear to pull back in. After you pass a truck, maintain your speed.

When another driver is passing you, maintain your speed. Do not speed up. Help the other driver pass you safely by moving to the right side of your lane to give her or him more room and a better view of the road ahead. At night, make sure your low beam headlights are on.

When a truck passes you, you can help the truck driver by keeping to the far side of your lane. You'll make it easier for the truck driver if you reduce your speed slightly. Do not speed up while the truck is passing.

Yellow lane lines separate lanes of traffic moving in opposite directions.

Broken Yellow Line: A broken yellow line separates lanes of traffic moving in opposite directions. Stay to the right of the line, unless you are passing a vehicle in front of you. When passing, you may cross this line temporarily when it is safe to do so.

Double Yellow Lines, One Solid, One Broken: A solid yellow line to the right of a broken yellow center line means passing or crossing is prohibited in that lane, except when turning left. If the broken line is closer to you, you can cross the broken line only to pass another vehicle and only when it is safe to do so.

Double Yellow Lines: Double solid yellow lines prohibit vehicles moving in either direction from crossing the lines. You may not cross these lines unless turning left when it is safe to do so.



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Drowsy Driving Causes Crash

Wick Thomas, 19, was driving home exhausted from attending an event and then a friend's birthday party when he woke up to a loud noise and discovered he was no longer on the road but in a river. Thomas and his passenger survived the accident, but "I nearly died, nearly killed my best friend and completely destroyed a Ford Explorer," he said. "It's not worth the risk."

Source: *FortWayne.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Thirty-seven percent of the driving population says they have nodded off for at least a moment or fallen asleep while driving at some time in their life. An estimated 7.5 million drivers have fallen asleep while driving within the last month.

While some hold the perception that drowsy driving occurs mostly late at night or in the early morning hours, just 28% of drivers reporting a recent drowsy driving experience report this experience occurring between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m. More than one-third (35%) of drivers who nodded off while driving within the past six months say their last experience occurred between 6:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. An additional 17% report they nodded off between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conservatively estimates that 100,000 police-reported crashes are the direct result of driver fatigue each year. This results in an estimated 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses.

Before hitting the road:

Get a good night's sleep. While this varies from individual to individual, sleep experts recommend between 7-9 hours of sleep per night.

- Plan to drive long trips with a companion. Passengers can help look for early warning signs of fatigue or switch drivers when needed. Passengers should stay awake to talk to the driver.
- Schedule regular stops every 100 miles or 2 hours. When you stop, stretch or take a short walk.

- Avoid alcohol and medications (over-the-counter and prescribed) that may impair performance. Alcohol interacts with fatigue, increasing its effects.
- Consult your physician or a local sleep disorders center for diagnosis and treatment if you suffer frequent daytime sleepiness, have difficulty sleeping at night often, and/or snore loudly every night.

You are at risk of drowsy driving if you:

- Are sleep-deprived or fatigued (6 hours of sleep or less triples your risk)
- Are suffering from sleep loss (insomnia), poor quality sleep, or a sleep debt
- Drive long distances without proper rest breaks
- Drive through the night, in mid-afternoon, or when you would normally be asleep
- Take sedating medications (antidepressants, cold tablets, antihistamines). If you are driving, check the label before you take a drug for warnings about its effects. If you are not sure it is safe to take the drug and drive, ask your doctor or pharmacist about any side effects.
- Work more than 60 hours a week (increases your risk by 40%)
- Work more than one job and your main job involves shift work
- Drink even small amounts of alcohol
- Drive alone or on a long, rural, dark or boring road

Signs that tell you to stop and rest:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, or heavy eyelids
- Daydreaming; wandering/disconnected thoughts
- Trouble remembering the last few miles driven; missing exits or traffic signs
- Yawning repeatedly or rubbing your eyes
- Trouble keeping your head up
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, or hitting a shoulder rumble strip
- Feeling restless and irritable

Remember – the only cure for sleepiness is sleep.