

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Teens Killed, Injured in Pickup Truck Crash

Two teenagers died and two others suffered incapacitating injuries when the pickup truck they were traveling in left a dirt road, drove over a small embankment, and hit a tree. Police have determined that alcohol and speeding were factors in the crash, and none of the four were wearing a seat belt.

Source: *Gainesville.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

### Did you know?

- 65% of young drivers (15-20 years old) of passenger vehicles involved in collisions who had been drinking were unrestrained. Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed, 74% were unrestrained. (NHTSA, 2003)

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Teens Killed, Injured in Pickup Truck Crash
- 2 Two Teens Killed when Car Rips in Half
- 3 Teen Dies after Rolling Her Vehicle
- 4 Teen Injured in Crash on Snow-covered Road



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- Research continues to show that young drivers are more often involved in alcohol-related collisions than any other comparable age group (NHTSA, 2001)
- 25% of 15-20 year old drivers killed in motor vehicle collisions during 2003 had been drinking; 19% were impaired. (NHTSA, 2004)
- Fifty-four percent of teenage motor vehicle deaths in 2000 occurred on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. (IIHS, 2002)
- Findings from four studies have quantified the collision risk associated with teenage drivers transporting teenage passengers. Collectively, these studies indicate that the presence of passengers strongly increases collision risk for teenage drivers; the more passengers the greater the risk. (Williams, December 2001 & BEGINNING TEENAGE DRIVERS, a joint IIHS and NHTSA publication)
- There are over six million traffic crashes each year, and more than 42,000 people die in those crashes. In addition to the cost in human lives, the economic cost exceeds \$230 billion annually. Some of these costs include:
  - \$580- The cost per person of every person in the US as a result of car crashes.
  - \$45 billion- Alcohol-impaired driving crashes annually.
  - \$27.4 billion- Lost due to speeding crashes annually.

## Two Teens Killed when Car Rips in Half

Two teenage passengers in the back seat were killed while the teenage driver and front-seat passenger were injured in a crash when the driver lost control after trying to pass another car at a high rate of speed. The car went airborne and its passenger side slammed into a tree; the vehicle was about eight feet above the ground at the point of impact and split in two.

Source: *ChicagoTribune.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors in crashes. Thirty percent of all fatal crashes are caused by speeding. In 2004, 13,192 lives were lost 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.

Newton's Laws of Motion are fundamental to a basic understanding of and respect for forces generated by motor vehicle crashes. Newton's Laws of Motion can be summarized as follows:

An object in a state of rest, or in motion at a constant speed, will remain in that state unless acted upon by an external force.

This law illustrates the concept of inertia. This means that if you are riding in a car at a given speed and must stop suddenly or if the car strikes another object, the inertia of your body will resist the stopping of the vehicle. This is why you feel yourself slide forward against your seat belt.

An external force applied to an object at rest, or in motion at a constant speed, will change the object's motion in the direction in which the force is applied and by acceleration directly proportional to the magnitude of the force and inversely proportional to the object's mass.

The energy an object has as it moves is called kinetic energy. The faster your car moves, the more kinetic energy it has. In a crash, kinetic energy must be dissipated. When kinetic energy is transferred to

vehicle occupants, injuries and fatalities occur. Kinetic energy increases dramatically as weight and speed increase. At 60 mph, a vehicle possesses energy that is four times as great as that at 30 mph. An increase in speed from 50 to 65 mph increases kinetic energy by sixty-nine percent.

For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

For example, a five-pound weight on a table exerts five pounds of force. At the same time, the table pushes up on the weight with a force of five pounds. Mass and speed determine the amount of force involved in a collision. If you double the speed of a car, you increase its force of impact four times. If you triple the speed, the impact is nine times as great.

Higher speeds reduce maneuverability, increase stopping distances, and decrease reaction time. Problems caused by increased speed are often magnified in adverse conditions, such as poor visibility or on wet or snowy roads. At sufficiently high speeds, the physical limits of the vehicle or roadway may be exceeded.

Stay a safe distance behind a vehicle you want to pass. The closer you get to the vehicle you want to pass, the less you can see ahead. This is especially true when passing trucks, trailers, and other large vehicles. Before you pull out to pass, check your blind spots and make sure that you have plenty of time and room to pass. Give your signal before you move into the left lane. Do not return to the right side of the road until you can see the tires of the vehicle you passed in your rearview mirror.

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## Teen Dies after Rolling Her Vehicle

Taylor Falligant, 16, died after losing control of her vehicle in a crash police say was caused by speeding and weather conditions. The vehicle slid across the centerline and into a ditch on the opposite side of the road where it struck a utility pole, rolled over and came to rest on its roof; Falligant was not wearing a safety belt.

Source: *GazetteExtra.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

### Did you know?

- Defensive driving means doing all you can to prevent crashes. As a defensive driver, you will "give" a little. You will change your driving to fit the weather conditions, the way you feel, and the actions of other drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Identify the roadway surfaces and conditions each time you begin to drive. If the weather changes while you are driving, roadway surfaces may change. For example, if it is sunny when you start out but begins raining during your drive, you must change your driving behavior to accommodate the slippery road surface.
- Friction is required to stop your vehicle. Wet roads have less friction than dry roads, so it will take longer to stop on wet roads, and even longer to stop on icy roads.
- Weather and road conditions present greater problems to the motorcyclist than to the driver of a motor vehicle. A motorcyclist cannot cope with adverse weather conditions as well as a motor vehicle operator. A puddle may hide a hole that jolts your car; the same hidden hole can throw a motorcycle out of control. When it rains, reduced traction makes it difficult for a motorcyclist to balance. It is more difficult for the motorcyclist to stay in control on slippery roads. Wet or icy roads impair a motorcyclist's ability to brake and maneuver. Wind gusts can move a motorcycle across an entire lane.
- During a rainstorm, pedestrians may be more concerned about protection from the weather than moving traffic. Be alert for pedestrians at night, even in well-lighted areas.
- Use your low beam headlights in bad weather in the daytime or at night. Using your high beams in heavy rain or fog will reflect the light back into your eyes.
- In wet weather, drive slowly. Do not speed up or brake quickly. Make sharp turns at a very slow speed.
- Occupants in a crash can cause serious injuries to other occupants when they collide with each other. Rear-seat passengers often hit people in the front seat of the vehicle as they fly forward. For this reason, you should insist that all passengers in your vehicle wear their safety belts.
- 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.
- Wear your safety belt and shoulder harness properly. Wear a shoulder belt only with a lap belt.
- Wear your safety belt every time you get in your vehicle; more than half of the crashes that cause injury or death happen at speeds less than 40 mph and within 25 miles from home.
- Research has found that use of lap/shoulder belts reduces 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.
- In 2004, the use of safety belts saved 15,434 lives. If all occupants of passenger vehicles wore their safety belts, an additional 5,839 lives could have been saved in 2004.
- Even the highest rated vehicle can roll over. By wearing your safety belt you can reduce your chance of being killed in a rollover by about 75 percent.



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## Teen Injured in Crash on Snow-covered Road

A 17-year-old teen was injured when her car traveled into a ditch and struck a power pole after she lost control of her vehicle on a snow-covered road. The teen was not wearing her seat belt.

Source: *FDLReporter.com* ♦

### Lessons Learned

When driving in snow, it's always a good idea to remember these safety tips:

- Check that your brakes, windshield wipers, defroster, heater and exhaust system are in good working condition.
- Make sure your vehicle's anti-freeze and windshield washer fluids are filled to their proper levels. Keep a windshield brush, ice scraper, gloves, a blanket and a flashlight readily available in your vehicle.
- Make sure your tires are accurately inflated and the tread is not worn. Remember, accidents can still happen even if you are driving with studded snow tires.
- Be certain that your vehicle is properly tuned and that your exhaust system is in correct working order.
- Consider carrying chains; be sure they are the correct size for your tires and are in good working order. Carry a flashlight and chain repair links. Chains must be installed on the drive wheels, so it is important that you know if your vehicle is front or rear wheel drive.
- On long winter trips, it is recommended that you carry water, food, warm blankets and extra clothing in your vehicle.
- Trips can take longer than expected during winter than other times of year, particularly if you encounter storm conditions or icy roads, so be sure make an early start and allow plenty of time to reach your destination. Let a friend or loved one know WHERE you're going, WHAT route you'll be driving, WHEN you expect to arrive and WHO to call if there is a problem.
- Take the time to keep your windshield and windows clear. Scraping a "porthole" in your windows is not safe; be sure to clear the entire window, or give your

defroster enough time to melt the ice.

- Be sure that snow and ice are not blocking out your headlights and taillights. For better visibility in storm conditions, it's always smart to drive with your lights ON.
  - Loose snow and ice on the roof of your car can cause dangerous driving conditions. It will slide off the roof and cover your windshield as you're driving or fly off onto someone else's windshield, potentially causing them to lose control of their vehicle.
  - Visibility is often limited in winter by weather conditions, so be extra observant and drive defensively. Slow down and keep an eye out for other vehicles. During a storm, visibility may be so restricted that it is difficult to see the flashing lights of slow moving equipment. Remember, during the winter, stopping distances become longer.
  - While driving in snow, your vehicle's tires are always just barely grasping the road. Rapid movements lead to skids and loss of control. Always accelerate, turn, and brake slowly and gently. Anticipate turns and stops. Leave plenty of distance between you and other cars.
  - Do not use your cruise control while driving in winter storm conditions.
  - Do not use your cell phone, don't fiddle with the radio and do not allow your passengers distract you.
  - Of course, everyone in your vehicle needs to wear his or her seatbelts.
  - Plan your trips carefully and listen to the local weather reports or the National Weather Service for the predicted weather conditions along your travel route. DO NOT call 911 to inquire about road conditions, it is for emergencies only. Get the weather report for your route beforehand, or pull over and dial 511 or call 1-800-THRUWAY to get the latest statewide and regional road conditions.
  - The safest place to drive during a snowstorm is behind the plow. Motorists should always maintain a safe following distance behind the plow; do not tailgate. If you can't see the snowplow's mirrors, the snowplow driver can't see you. And DO NOT pass a snowplow on the right when they are plowing—EVER!
- Despite their simplicity, hundreds of accidents occur every year because drivers failed to follow one or more of these safe-driving tips. Do not become a statistic—think before you drive!