

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Teen Killed, Another Injured in Hydroplane Crash

A 19-year-old passenger was killed and another 19-year-old passenger was injured when the 18-year-old driver of the vehicle they were riding in lost control on a curve due to hydroplaning and crashed into a building. The driver suffered minor injuries.

Source: *BostonHerald.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

During rainy conditions, wet roads will increase stopping distance. Driving is more dangerous even when only a few drops of rain fall. Roads are most slippery just after it begins to rain because the rain mixes with oil dropped from cars onto the road, creating a very slick surface.

When you are driving in the rain, slow down. Driving too fast in the rain makes hydroplaning more likely. When a car hydroplanes, the tires ride on a thin film of

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water instead of on the road. When this happens, you can easily lose control and skid. The law requires the tread on tires to meet certain standards, but if the tread on your tires is worn, your vehicle is more likely to hydroplane. Your vehicle can hydroplane in as little as 1/16 of an inch of water. Besides slowing down, you can also reduce your chances of hydroplaning by making sure your tires have the right air pressure and good tread. If your vehicle hydroplanes, ease your foot off the gas and allow your vehicle to slow down until your tires gain traction with the road.

The way that the road you are traveling on is structured is important to watch. Identify intersections, hills and curves early so you can respond accordingly.

If your vehicle skids, you need to respond quickly and calmly. A vehicle will skid when the tires lose their grip on the pavement. Slippery surfaces combined with sudden movement may cause you to skid. High speed, especially on curves, may also lead to skidding. When you feel your vehicle begin to skid, take your foot off the gas pedal. Do not use your brakes unless you are about to hit something. Steer the car into the direction of the skid to straighten the vehicle out. Then steer in the direction you wish to go. Straighten the steering wheel as soon as you are going in the correct direction. If you do not straighten in time, the car will begin to skid in the opposite direction. Begin to correct your steering as soon as you go into the skid. The longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to get out of the skid. All of your steering movements must be quick but smooth. Once you are going straight again, you may begin to accelerate slowly.

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## Teen Distracted by Cell Phone Killed in Crash

A 17-year-old teen was killed after under-compensating for a turn, panicking, and severely overcompensating in the opposite direction, putting her vehicle in a sideways slide and colliding with another vehicle on the driver's side. Police say she was on her cell phone at the time of the crash.

Source: *RepublicanHerald.com* ♦

### Lessons Learned

Cellular telephones are everywhere. In an emergency, they can be a lifesaver. In non-emergency situations, they can be a great tool, if you use the cellular telephone in a safe and responsible manner. However, driving while talking on the telephone can be dangerous to you and other motorists. Cell phones can be a serious source of driver inattention.

Laws about cell phone use while driving vary by state. Check with your state for information about laws limiting or prohibiting the use of cell phones while driving. Many safety organizations recommend drivers not use their cell phones while driving. However, if using a phone is essential, drivers should follow these safety tips:

- Pull over to the side of the road to use your cellular telephone. This is the safest precaution you can take.

- Know your cellular telephone. Get to know your phone and its many features such as speed dial and redial. Take advantage of these features so you won't take your attention off the road.

- Use a hands-free device, if available. Two hands on the steering wheel are always safer than one. Using a wireless phone while driving increases your chance of getting into an accident by 400 percent! When you're searching for a number, dialing or talking, you're not watching the road like you should. "Hands-free" phone features help, but they can't prevent you from becoming involved in a conversation and losing concentration.

- Your phone should be within easy reach; this way you can grab it without taking your eyes off the road.

- Don't use the telephone during hazardous conditions. If your driving conditions include heavy traffic or severe weather, tell the person that you are driving and you will call them back. Remember, your first responsibility is to pay attention to the road.

- While you are driving, don't take notes or look up phone numbers.

- Be sensible about dialing. If possible, place your calls when you are not moving or before pulling into traffic. However, if you need to dial while driving, dial only a few numbers at a time, check traffic and your mirrors, and then continue dialing.

- Don't engage in distracting conversations. Stressful or emotional conversations don't mix with safe driving. This combination can be dangerous because you are not paying attention to your driving. Tell the person you are talking to that you'll call back. Be safe!

- Use your phone to call for help. Dial 9-1-1 for emergency help. This is a free call on your cellular phone. For other non-emergency situations (broken-down vehicle, broken traffic signal, etc.), call roadside assistance or special non-emergency wireless numbers.

NOTE: Research shows that the real distraction is mental because you're talking to someone else outside of your car. Holding the phone and dialing it is just a small part of phone distractions. An inattentive driver may strike another vehicle or another large object even when the vehicle or object is in plain view of the driver. An estimated 292,000 drivers were involved in a crash attributed to cell phone use between 1997 and 2002.

While you are on the road, concentrate on the road and traffic. Do not carry out activities while driving that negatively impact the operation of the vehicle.

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## High Speed, Alcohol, Drugs Factors in Deadly Crash

A teenage girl was killed, a male passenger was injured and the male driver was also injured when the SUV they were riding in rolled down a 150-foot embankment in a crash that involved high speed, alcohol and drugs.

Source: *LocalNews8.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Over-the-counter medicines are medicines that you can buy without a prescription from your doctor.

Narcotics are the most widely used prescription pain relievers. Narcotics are drugs that relieve pain and cause drowsiness or sleep.

Tranquilizers are prescription drugs that are used to treat medical conditions such as severe anxiety, stress disorders and muscle tension.

Tranquilizers are depressants. This means they reduce the amount of activity in the brain and central nervous system. Tranquilizers can relax people to the point where they get clumsy and have trouble thinking straight. Exceeding the prescribed dose of tranquilizers can cause problems with thinking, memory and judgment. If someone drinks alcohol and takes a tranquilizer, the amount of activity in their nervous system will be greatly reduced. This can lead to death.

When you look at the effects of the over-the-counter and prescription drugs, such as drowsiness, dizziness, nervousness, confused thinking and blurred vision, it's easy to see how dangerous it would be to take one of these drugs and drive. Even in the recommended or prescribed dose, the side effects of the drug are beyond your control. Always follow label instructions or the advice of your pharmacist or doctor. Err on the side of caution – if you don't think the drug should affect your driving but you just don't feel well, don't drive.

After alcohol, marijuana is the substance most frequently found in fatal automobile crashes. Even a moderate dose of marijuana can impair driving performance. Alcohol and marijuana are also often found together, resulting in a dramatic spike in impairment levels and decreased driving performance. The effects of a low dose of marijuana combined with alcohol are much greater than for either drug alone.

Combining any two drugs, or a drug with alcohol, may result in the synergistic effect. This means that the combination of drugs produces effects that are greater

than the sum of the effects of the two drugs. This is called an additive effect; instead of a  $1 + 1 = 2$  result, the synergistic effect may cause a  $1 + 1 = 3$  result. Never combine narcotics with alcohol or tranquilizers. Even small doses might cause problems. These drug interactions may result in unconsciousness and death.

The effects of alcohol use vary from person to person even when the amount of alcohol used is equal. Though the effects and severity 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.

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. One common effect of alcohol on behavior is a feeling of wellbeing. This feeling is known as euphoria. Euphoria can make a person feel energized and confident. Alcohol-induced euphoria can cause people to take chances they normally would not take. But this behavior can be deadly behind the wheel of a vehicle, because euphoria is only a state of mind. Alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the working of the nervous system. Thinking and judging abilities are duller and slower than usual.

Alcohol quickly diminishes the drinker's ability to concentrate. A decrease in the ability to concentrate greatly increases a driver's level of risk. A person's driving ability can be reduced after only one drink and driving ability decreases as the amount of alcohol in a person's body increases. An alcohol-impaired driver is less apt to interpret correctly what he or she sees.

Alcohol also weakens a driver's inhibitions, which are the inner forces of a person's personality that restrain one's impulsive behavior. For example, a driver who is under the influence might attempt a left turn in front of traffic that he or she would not attempt when sober.



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## Teen Charged in November Crash Death

The 16-year-old driver of a car that crashed in November, killing a teen passenger and injuring other young people, has been charged as a juvenile with vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence. The cause of the crash was speeding and swerving, which caused the car to roll.

Source: *TahoeDailyTribune.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Driver behavior, speeding, distraction and inattentiveness play a significant role in rollover crashes. Almost all vehicles involved in a rollover somehow lost control, ran off the road and struck an object such as a ditch, curb, guardrail or soft soil, causing the wheels to “trip” on the object and the vehicle to roll over. It is also important to note that rollover crashes have a higher fatality rate than other kinds of crashes. More than 10,000 people die each year in rollover crashes. By wearing your safety belt you can reduce your chance of being killed in a rollover by about 75 percent.

According to the American College of Emergency Physicians, aggressive driving is a factor in thousands of highway deaths a year. Speeding, tailgating, running red lights and/or stop signs, unsafe maneuvers such as driving on the shoulder and weaving in and out of traffic, and generally disregarding public or personal safety are all examples of aggressive driving.

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.

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.

Speed causes many crashes, and more drivers are convicted of speeding than any other offense. 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.

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.

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.

One way to look at speeding is in terms of benefits and risks. This means that the benefits and risks of speeding will be evaluated and the decision of whether or not to continue speeding will be made based on that comparison. On a piece of paper, create one column labeled “Benefits” and another labeled “Risks.” In the Benefits column, list all the good things you can derive from speeding. For example, you might write down that the benefits of speeding are saving time, having fun, and reducing stress. Once you have completed your list of benefits, consider the Risks column. Write down all the bad things you could derive from speeding. Your list of risks might include tickets, poor gas mileage, higher insurance rates due to tickets or accidents, and greater risk of property damage, injury, and death if you are involved in an accident. After the list of risks is complete, compare your lists of benefits against your list of risks. Do any of the risks cancel out any of the benefits? For example, getting a ticket might cancel out saving time, and an accident might cancel out having fun. Are the benefits you receive from speeding worth the risks you face?

Many people think, “It won't happen to me.” Unfortunately, many of the people who suffer injuries or deaths thought the very same thing before it happened to them.

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.