

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Hurt in Bicycle Crash

A teenage bicyclist was hospitalized with non-life-threatening injuries after crashing into the side of a car in an intersection. The bicyclist was not wearing a helmet.

Source: WTAP.com ♦

Lessons Learned

When riding a bicycle, you must know the laws for doing so in your state. In most states, persons riding bicycles on a roadway have the same rights (with certain exceptions) and duties as motor vehicle drivers and may be ticketed for traffic violations. Follow these tips for safe riding:

- Do not allow a young passenger to remain in a child seat or carrier when you are not in immediate control of the bicycle.
- Bicycle helmets are recommended for all ages.

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for Teens and their Parents



- When riding on a sidewalk or crosswalk, yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and give an audible signal before passing.
- Keep at least one hand on the handlebars.
- On the roadway, check behind you before changing lanes.
- If you are not traveling at the speed of other traffic, stay on the right-most portion of the roadway except when passing, making a left turn, avoiding hazards or when a lane is too narrow for you and a car to share it safely.
- Do not ride two abreast when this will impede the flow of traffic.
- Signal your intent to turn or stop to other vehicles.

Here are some tips on sharing the road with a bicyclist as the driver of a passenger vehicle:

- Allow plenty of clearance when passing a cyclist. Reduce your speed if the roadway is narrow.
- After parallel parking, check for bicyclists before opening a street-side door.
- At night, avoid using high beam headlights when a cyclist is approaching. The cyclist could be temporarily blinded.
- Do not follow a cyclist closely. If you are too close and the cyclist must lay their bike down on the road in an emergency, you could run them over.

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Speeding Teen Gets Two Years in Prison

A 19-year-old man was sentenced to two years in prison for a conviction of two counts of negligent homicide following the deaths of two passengers in a crash caused by speeding. The man received another ticket for speeding after the fatal crash.

Source: *2theadvocate.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Speed causes many crashes. More drivers are convicted of speeding than any other offense. To avoid being fined or involved in a crash, obey the speed limits.

Speed is very important 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.

In 2004, 13,192 lives were lost nationwide as a result of speeding. Thirty percent of all fatal crashes are caused by 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. Speeding increases braking distance. Speeding increases the distance that a car travels before the driver can react to a dangerous situation.

It's important to be aware of all your surroundings, at all times, while you're operating any vehicle. You must identify and obey all posted speeds, and at the same time, identify any potential hazards and reduce your speed appropriately to avoid any hazards on the road, even if it means driving below the posted speed limit.

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. For example, if the weather is bad or there is a lot of traffic, you must drive more slowly than the posted speed. The safe speed is the one that allows you to have complete control of your vehicle.

Drive with the flow of traffic (within the speed limit). You should not drive so slowly that you block other vehicles moving at normal, safe speeds. You can be issued a ticket for driving too slowly.

Children require a safe environment in which to travel to and from school. Normal speed limits do not allow traffic enough time to stop suddenly if children step out into the road. Children often behave unpredictably, so obey the posted speed limit and look out for them.

Speeding and tailgating can be a deadly combination. Tailgating is a major cause of crashes. If you are following too closely and the vehicle ahead stops or slows suddenly, you may not be able to stop in time.

Aggressive driving is dangerous driving behavior that may be defined as the intent to harass, intimidate, injure or obstruct another person while committing one or more traffic offenses such as failure to stop or yield the right-of-way, evasion of a traffic control device or failure to give way to an overtaking vehicle. When they're behind the wheel of their vehicles, these high-risk drivers take out their frustrations on other motorists. Their frustration level runs high while their concern for fellow motorists runs low. They run stop signs and red lights, speed, tailgate, weave in and out of traffic, pass on the right (including on the shoulder and unpaved portions of the road), make improper and unsafe lane changes, make hand and facial gestures, scream, honk and flash their lights. Protect yourself. If you see an aggressive driver, stay out of the way. Don't challenge the aggressive driver by speeding up or trying to out-manuever him. Avoid eye contact and ignore his gestures and shouting.

It's important that you know the rules of the road, but simply knowing the rules doesn't make you a safe driver. To become a safe driver, you must practice defensive driving techniques. This means perfecting your powers of observation, traffic safety attitudes, courtesy to other drivers, communication abilities and overall driving skills.



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Teen Passenger Killed in Crash with Tractor Trailer

A 17-year-old boy was killed when he was ejected from the car he was riding in after the teenage driver hit the back of a tractor trailer and the car flipped onto its side.

Source: *FKDM.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Whether you are sharing the road with a car, truck, bus, or other large vehicle, it's important for safety's sake to obey traffic laws, abide by the rules of the road, and drive defensively. Are there any special rules for sharing the road with a truck? Yes! Here are some suggestions from professional truck drivers.

- **Blind Spots:** Although most large vehicles have several rearview mirrors, it is easy for a car or motorcycle to be hidden in a large vehicle's blind spot. Do not follow closely behind a truck or a bus. When driving near a large vehicle, be aware of the driver's blind spots on the right, left, front and behind.
- **Rear Blind Spots:** Unlike passenger cars, trucks and buses have deep blind spots directly behind them. Tailgating greatly increases your chances of a rear-end collision with a commercial vehicle.
- **Unsafe Passing:** Another "No Zone" is just in front of trucks and buses. When passing a bus or truck, be sure you can see the cab in your rearview mirror before pulling in front.
- **Wide Right Turns:** Truck and bus drivers sometimes need to swing wide to the left in order to safely negotiate a right turn. They cannot see cars directly behind or beside them. Cutting in between the commercial vehicle and the curb or shoulder to the right increases the possibility of a crash.
- **Backing Up:** When a truck is backing up, it sometimes must block the street to maneuver its trailer accurately. Never cross behind a truck that is preparing to back up or is in the process of doing so. Remember, most trailers are eight and a half feet wide and can completely hide objects that suddenly come between them and loading areas. Automobile drivers attempting to pass behind a truck enter a blind spot for both drivers.
- When passing a truck, first check to your front and rear, and move into the passing lane only if it is clear and you are in a legal passing zone.
- 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. Complete your pass as quickly as possible, and don't stay alongside the other vehicle.
- If the driver blinks his lights after you pass, it's a signal that it is clear to pull back in. Be sure to move back only when you can see the front of the truck in your rearview mirror. After you pass a truck, maintain your speed.
- 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. In any event, do not speed up while the truck is passing. After passing, the truck driver will signal to let you know that the truck will be returning to your lane.
- When you meet a truck coming from the opposite direction, keep as far as possible to the side to avoid a sideswipe crash and to reduce the wind turbulence between the two vehicles. Remember that the turbulence pushes the vehicles apart; it does not draw them together.
- In general, trucks take slightly longer than cars to stop because of their size. However, at highway speeds or on wet roads, trucks may have better traction and stability, allowing them to stop more quickly. A car following too closely may not be able to stop quickly enough to avoid rear-ending the truck.
- When you follow a truck at night, always dim your headlights. Bright lights from a vehicle behind will blind the truck driver when they reflect off the truck's large side mirrors.

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Alcohol Believed to be Factor in Teen's Fatal Crash

A 19-year-old man was killed in a single-vehicle crash after his vehicle ran off the road and struck a tree. The teen, who was not wearing a seat belt and had to be extricated from the vehicle by the fire department, was pronounced dead at the scene; while the crash is still under investigation, alcohol is believed to be a factor.

Source: *DetNews.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

If you drink alcohol, even a little, your chance of being in a crash is much greater than if you did not drink any alcohol. No one can drink alcohol and drive safely, even if you have been driving for many years. Even though the severity of its affect varies, alcohol affects everyone who uses it.

Young drivers are more affected by alcohol because their bodies are still in the growth process and their livers have not developed to the extent that they can efficiently process the alcohol in their bloodstream. All states now enforce a minimum drinking age of 21.

Because drinking alcohol and then driving is so dangerous, the penalties are very tough. People who drive after drinking risk heavy fines, higher insurance rates, loss of license and even jail sentences.

Alcohol reduces all of the important skills necessary to drive safely, such as judgment, reaction, vision and concentration. A driver affected by alcohol has a decreased ability to reason clearly and to make sound judgments. However, the driver may feel as though thinking and judging abilities are sharper and quicker than usual.

Alcohol is absorbed into the lining of the stomach and then passes directly into the bloodstream and reaches your brain within minutes after consumption. Alcohol affects those areas of your brain that control judgment and skill and this one reason why drinking alcohol is so dangerous; it affects your judgment. A person's judgment is the first thing affected after drinking an alcoholic beverage. Good judgment is important to driving but in this case, judgment helps you to know when to stop drinking. Alcohol puts

good judgment on hold. You do not know when you have had too much to drink until it is too late. It is a little like a sunburn; by the time you feel it, it is already too late.

Alcohol slows your reflexes and reaction time, reduces your ability to see clearly and makes you less alert. As the amount of alcohol in your body increases, your judgment worsens and your skills decrease. You will have trouble judging distances, speeds and the movement of other vehicles. You will also have trouble controlling your vehicle.

The muscular reactions of a driver who has been drinking can become slow and clumsy. Steering and braking movements can become uncoordinated. The driver might over-steer, brake late or not brake at all. The driver might not be able to negotiate turns properly and safely. Such actions cause drinking drivers to be involved in serious crashes.

The liver can only process 1/2 ounce of alcohol per hour. You cannot speed this process up. Only time, not black coffee or a cold shower, will sober up a person who is impaired.

Besides alcohol, there are many other drugs that can affect a person's ability to drive safely. These drugs can have effects like those of alcohol, or even worse. This is true of many prescription drugs and even many of the drugs you can buy without a prescription.

Drugs taken for headaches, colds, hay fever or other allergies or those to calm nerves can make a person drowsy and affect their driving. Pep pills, "uppers" and diet pills can cause a person to be nervous, dizzy, and unable to concentrate and can affect his or her vision. Other prescription drugs can affect your reflexes, judgment, vision and alertness in ways similar to alcohol.

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.

Never drink alcohol while you are taking other drugs. These drugs could multiply the effects of alcohol or have additional effects of their own. These effects not only reduce your ability to be a safe driver but could cause serious health problems, even death.

Illegal drugs may affect your ability to be a safe driver. For example, studies have shown that people who use marijuana make more mistakes, have more trouble adjusting to glare, and get arrested for traffic violations more than other drivers.

