

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Police Charge Teen with Hosting Party before Fatal Crash

A Connecticut teen who hosted a party where alcohol was served to minors prior to a fatal crash has been charged with an infraction. A 16-year-old who attended the party crashed into another vehicle, killing him and the two people in the other vehicle after his car burst into flames.

Source: *Newsday.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Driving under the influence of intoxicating beverages means that a driver's senses and judgment are impaired by alcohol. After only one drink, alcohol begins to impair reaction time, coordination and balance. Vision, and the ability to judge distance, is affected, making it more difficult to react and to drive safely. Drinking and driving accidents often kill passengers or seriously injure others involved.

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The only scientific way to check alcohol consumption is through blood alcohol concentration, or BAC. A simple breath test will show a motorist's BAC.

There is just as much alcohol in the average beer as there is in the average drink of whiskey or wine. One and one-half ounces of 86-proof whiskey, five ounces of table wine or 12 ounces of beer all contain the same amount of alcohol: About ½ ounce of alcohol per drink.

Alcohol is not digested. It passes through a person's stomach and small intestine directly into the bloodstream and then is carried to all parts of the body. Food slows the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream, but heavy drinking will always produce a high BAC, regardless of the amount of food consumed. Eating does not make a motorist sober - only time will.

Law enforcement is trained to notice certain telltale drinking and driving signs:

- Speeding or Slow Driving - A drinking driver often thinks high-speed driving is safe. Or, a drinking driver may be overly cautious and drive more slowly than the normal flow of traffic.
- Weaving - Even though a driver may stay in the correct lane, driving straight may be a problem.
- Quick stops - A drinking driver may make sudden stops at a traffic sign or light rather than easing up to it.

The best way to reduce the risk of a crash caused by drinking and driving is to not drive at all after drinking. Arrange for a designated driver, use public transportation or call a cab.

## Unbelted Teen Dies in Rollover Crash

A 17-year-old boy died in a rollover crash after he was thrown from his vehicle. The teen overcorrected when his car ran off the right side of the road, causing the car to flip. The boy, who was not wearing a seat belt, died from his injuries.

Source: *NewsAdvance.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

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. In a crash, safety belts:

- Keep you from being thrown from the vehicle. The risk of death is five times greater if you are thrown from a vehicle in a crash.
- Keep you from being thrown against others in the vehicle. Occupants in a crash can also 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.
- Keep the driver behind the wheel, where he or she can control the vehicle.
- Keep you from being thrown against parts of your vehicle, such as the steering wheel or windshield.

Wear a lap belt around your hips, not your stomach. Fasten the belt snugly. Wear a shoulder belt only with a lap belt. Don't just use your safety belt for long trips or 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.

Fastening your safety belt must be part of your driving routine. This way, you will more comfortable wearing the belt than not and will never forget it. Before you start your engine:

- Make sure all the windows on your vehicle are clean. Remove anything that blocks your view of the road.
- Adjust the seat so you can reach all controls.

- Adjust the inside and outside rearview mirrors. You should not have to lean forward or backward to use them.
- Lock all vehicle doors.
- Put on your safety belt and ask all passengers to do the same.

Make sure your vehicle is in park or neutral gear before starting the engine. Never move your vehicle until you have looked in front, behind and to the side for pedestrians and oncoming traffic. When it is safe, signal and pull into traffic.

When buying a vehicle, one factor to consider is the likelihood of the vehicle rolling over and the conditions under which it might do so. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation, conducts crash tests of new vehicles to determine the extent to which drivers and passengers might be protected from injury during frontal and side-impact crashes. The agency also conducts rollover tests to determine the likelihood of a vehicle rolling over if involved in a single-vehicle crash.

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. Rollover crashes have a higher fatality rate than other kinds of crashes. More than 10,000 people die each year in rollover crashes. Remember: 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 Dies in Wreck with Tractor-Trailer

A 19-year-old man was killed in a crash after the 17-year-old driver of the vehicle he was a passenger in overcorrected after running off the road and pulled into the path of an oncoming tractor-trailer. The impact of the crash killed the man when the car was hit on the passenger side.

Source: *NewsDispatch.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

In 2004, 416,000 large trucks (gross vehicle weight rating greater than 10,000 pounds) were involved in traffic crashes in the United States: 4,862 were involved in fatal crashes. A total of 5,190 people died (12 percent of all the traffic fatalities reported in 2004) and an additional 116,000 were injured in those crashes. Large trucks accounted for 8 percent of all vehicles involved in fatal crashes and 4 percent of all vehicles involved in injury and property-damage-only crashes. One out of eight traffic fatalities in 2004 resulted from a collision involving a large truck.

Of the fatalities that resulted from crashes involving large trucks, 77 percent were occupants of another vehicle, 8 percent were non-occupants, and 15 percent were occupants of a large truck.

For safety's sake, you must understand all traffic laws, be courteous, abide by the rules of the road and drive responsibly. Large trucks include not only trucks but also any vehicle you have trouble seeing around, such as buses, vans, delivery trucks, motor homes, and some sport utility vehicles (SUV).

When you are driving in the vicinity of a large truck, stay out of the driver's blind spots. Remember that a large vehicle's blind spots may be different from the blind spots you have in your vehicle, which is smaller, shaped differently, and sits differently in relation to the road. The "No Zone" is the area around the vehicle that a driver can't see in her or his rearview or side mirrors. Many trucks have a sign that reads, "If you can't see my mirrors, I can't see you." When you see this sign, make sure you can see the vehicle's mirrors. If you can't, speed up or slow down until you are out of the driver's No Zone. Otherwise, you might be involved in a crash if the driver of the large vehicle swerves or changes lanes.

Another No Zone is the area directly behind large vehicles. Tailgating greatly increases your chances of a rear-end collision.

When you follow a large vehicle, you cannot see what the driver of that vehicle can see. If the driver must stop suddenly, you may not know why. You must rely on the brake lights of that vehicle. By the time the brake lights are on, the driver's reaction distance has passed and her or his braking distance has begun. Your total stopping distance must be less than that driver's braking distance. You need as much time and space as possible to make this happen.

The area directly in front of large vehicles is another No Zone. 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.

Another No Zone is between a large vehicle and the curb on the shoulder to the right when the vehicle is making a wide right turn. When a vehicle makes a wide right turn, sometimes the driver needs to swing the vehicle wide to the left to safely negotiate the turn. The driver cannot see directly behind or beside the vehicle. Cutting in between the vehicle and the curb on the shoulder to the right greatly increases the possibility of the crash.

The area behind a large truck when the truck is backing up is another No Zone. Sometimes a truck 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. Most trailers are eight and a half feet wide and can completely hide objects that suddenly come between them and loading areas. Drivers attempting to pass behind a truck enter a blind spot for both drivers.

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.

If you are following a truck, stay out of its blind spot to the rear. Avoid following too closely, and position your vehicle so the truck driver can see it in his side mirrors. Then you will have a good view of the road ahead, and the truck driver can give you plenty of warning for a stop or a turn.



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## Teen Driver Facing Charges after Crash

A 17-year-old driver faces charges of violating the junior operator passenger restriction, speeding and operating a motor vehicle as to endanger after a single-vehicle crash into a tree. She and another teen were hospitalized with injuries following the crash, while a third teen was unhurt.

Source: *TownOnline.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.

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.

Vehicles are designed to absorb energy forces in a manner that will reduce the direct forces that reach the vehicle occupants. Energy absorption is directly dependent on vehicle speed, angles of collision, and area of vehicle contacts. In any given collision each vehicle will experience a change in speed during the moment of collision. Depending on each vehicle's initial speed, this change in speed takes only milliseconds. There is very little time for the vehicle components to collapse, bend, fold or crumple in a manner that will protect the occupants within the vehicle.

In a direct rear-end collision of two passenger vehicles, much of the energy forces may be absorbed by the bumper systems alone, particularly at lower speeds. If one of the vehicles is a large truck, considerably more energy will be transmitted to the occupants of the smaller vehicle.

An angular collision is different. Acute angles may be considered sideswipe collisions as opposed to a 90-

degree T-bone type crash. Usually, the larger the angle, the more energy is transmitted to the occupant compartment.

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.

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.

Reaction Distance (1.5 seconds) + Braking Distance = Stopping Distance

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

Some drivers in oncoming vehicles may not realize that they have their high beam headlights on. If the oncoming vehicle's high beams are on, switch your lights quickly from low beam to high beam and back to low beam. Do not turn on your high beams. You could blind the other driver and cause a head-on collision with your vehicle. If the other vehicle's lights are still too bright, slow down and glance quickly at the right edge of the roadway as a guide for your lane position. To avoid being blinded, do not stare directly into the oncoming lights.

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.

Problems caused by increased speed are often magnified in adverse conditions, such as poor visibility or on wet or snowy roads. 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.

At sufficiently high speeds, the physical limits of the vehicle or roadway may be exceeded.