

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Teen Killed When Thrown From Vehicle

A 17-year-old Oklahoma boy was killed after being thrown from his vehicle in a single-vehicle crash. Investigators said the teen was apparently driving at an unsafe speed around a curve.

Source: NewsOK.com ♦

## Lessons Learned

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors in crashes. In 2005, speeding was a contributing factor in thirty percent of all fatal crashes, and 13,113 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes. Speeding affects the way a driver handles a 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.

Your car performs as a result of natural laws and energy of motion working together. When you drive a

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3,000 pound car at higher speeds, these forces are much greater. You may have a hard time maintaining control at highway speeds or in unusual situations that require you to make an emergency stop.

Three out of four crashes happen within 25 miles of home, at a speed of 45 miles per hour or less. About 40% of all fatal crashes occur on roads where the posted speed limit is 30 miles per hour or less.

One important thing to remember is that the greater the speed and mass of the vehicle, 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 dictating how much energy the vehicle can absorb to protect the occupants.

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 and for braking control.

When you have decided to decelerate, or brake, to reduce risk, you should have already considered the surface of the roadway. The amount of braking needed will vary with the speed of your car and the condition of the roadway. Avoid locking the brakes during an emergency stop. Locked brakes make steering impossible, since wheels must be turning to provide traction for steering.

When you decide to steer away from a conflict, execute just the amount of steering needed. Oversteering can cause you to lose control of your vehicle, especially at higher speeds.

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## Teen Dies of Injuries after Rear-ending Truck

A 17-year-old boy died and his 17-year old passenger was critically injured after the boy rear-ended a pickup truck. Both boys were ejected from the vehicle.

Source: *Ocala.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

The concept of one car length of space between two vehicles for every ten miles per hour has been rendered obsolete by NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) research. The primary reason for this is that people have difficulty judging what one car length is consistently. Furthermore, at fifty-five miles per hour, a vehicle travels 80.63 feet in one second (55 mph multiplied by a conversion factor of 1.466 equals 80.63 feet per second).

If a driver has accurately judged fifty-five feet of distance between his vehicle and the vehicle ahead and has to stop, the car will travel 60.47 feet before the driver can even begin to apply the brakes during the average reaction time of three-quarters of a second, all but assuring a collision. If you maintain a minimum (for clear, dry weather) of a two-second interval between you and the car ahead, at fifty-five mph you will have a 161.3 foot buffer ahead within which to react and stop.

When you are following another vehicle in your lane, you should have at least a two-second cushion between your vehicle and the one ahead. Pick out a stationary object ahead of the car in front of you, such as a white line across the road, the shadow of an overpass, or a parked car on the shoulder. Start counting when the lead vehicle passes that spot: one-thousand one, one-thousand two. If you have passed the spot you selected before you complete your two-second count, you are too close. Take your foot off the gas and slow down until you are a safe distance, or change lanes if it is safe.

There are times when two seconds' following distance is not enough. The two-second rule is a minimum. Additional seconds need to be added for darkness, bad weather, large vehicles, vehicles towing other vehicles, vehicles following others too closely, or any other less-than-ideal situations.

Two seconds is the short- or close-range environment, which you should scan for immediate

hazards.

Drivers should also look at least ten seconds ahead of their vehicles to become aware of the medium distance potential hazards. Always try to keep a safe area around you. Keep from getting boxed in and not having a way out if someone presents a hazard.

Following a motorcycle or a motorcycle following you may cause a problem. You should continuously check your rearview mirror and be aware of motorcycles behind you. When a motorcyclist is following you, try not to make any sudden stops.

When you are following a motorcyclist who is crossing railroad tracks or carrying a passenger, use extra caution. Railroad tracks may present a special problem because motorcycle tires can get caught in the grooves of the crossing, which could result in the rider losing balance. You should predict that the rider might lose balance and/or control at a railroad crossing.

The faster we drive, the further it will take us to stop. Several things must be considered to determine stopping distance.

The vehicle is another important factor to be considered in stopping distance. Worn or under-inflated tires negatively affect stopping distance. Vehicles must have brakes that meet certain standards; if brakes are not working properly, stopping distance will be affected. Whether or not your vehicle has an Anti-locking Braking System (ABS) must be considered as well.

Road and weather conditions must be considered. Friction is the most important factor in stopping a vehicle. Conditions such as wet roads or roads made of gravel reduce traction and increase stopping distance.

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## Teen Suffers Facial Injuries in Crash with Tree

An 18-year-old man suffered major facial injuries after the vehicle he was driving left the road and collided with a tree and a parked vehicle. Authorities say alcohol was a factor in the crash.

Source: CBS5.com♦

## Lessons Learned

Drinking alcoholic beverages and other drug use is widely accepted in our society. Advertisers often portray drinking as glamorous and sophisticated. Yet the abuse of drugs, including alcohol, is costly. It takes its toll in broken relationships, poor health, wasted lives and sometimes death.

This problem is greatly compounded when someone who drinks alcohol or uses other drugs also drives. A great number of collisions involve drivers who use alcohol and/or other drugs.

All states now enforce a minimum drinking age of 21. Nevertheless, alcohol-related crashes are still a top safety problem.

Many people who use alcohol do not realize that it is a drug. The word alcohol is the commonly used term for the chemical substance ethanol, grain alcohol, or ethyl alcohol.

The effects of alcohol vary from person to person. Equal amounts of alcohol affect different people in different ways. Even though the severity of its effects vary, alcohol affects everyone who uses it. One of the most serious problems of alcohol is that of the drinking driver. The demands of the driving task are so great that every driver needs to be in the best condition possible. A person cannot afford to increase the risk of driving by having his or her skills reduced by alcohol.

Everyone needs to know how alcohol affects the mental and physical abilities needed for safe driving.

When you consume alcohol, most of the alcohol is not digested. It is quickly absorbed directly into the bloodstream through the walls and lining of the stomach and small intestines. Once alcohol enters the bloodstream, it is quickly circulated to the brain. Alcohol has its greatest effect on the parts of the brain that control judgment and reasoning, the most critical skills needed by drivers.

Physical abilities become impaired soon after.

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. Some people have a false sense of confidence after they have a drink or two. For example, some people think they can dance or play pool better after a few drinks. There is nothing a person can do better after having a drink than she or he could do before having the drink. Drinking does not increase your ability to do anything better than you could before.

In addition, alcohol quickly diminishes the 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. A person's 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 one's personality that hold back or restrain one's impulsive behavior. A driver's inhibitions weaken as the alcohol content in the body increases. The person who is drinking may drive too fast, take needless risks or even drive into emergency situations without knowing or even caring what's happening.

As more alcohol enters the bloodstream, the area of the brain that controls muscular movements and body control begins to slow down. Even after the driver recognizes danger, the brain takes longer than normal to process the information and react to the danger. Messages the brain sends to different parts of the body might become confused.

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.

Alcohol affects a driver's ability to see clearly. Night vision, peripheral vision, color vision, and depth perception are all impaired.



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## Four Teens Injured, One Killed in Crash

Four teen boys were injured and one died at the scene of a single-vehicle, rollover crash. The driver failed to stop at a stop sign, lost control of the vehicle and rolled into a ditch.

Source: *KCRG.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Traffic signals control traffic and indicate which driver may go and which ones are required to stop. It is important to understand the meaning of each color and symbol. On vertical signals, the red light is on the top, the yellow is in the middle and the green is on the bottom. When signals are mounted horizontally, the red light is at the left, the yellow is in the middle and the green is to the right. The colors are always in the same position on the signals throughout the United States. This national uniformity allows colorblind people to drive safely.

Traffic signals are placed at intersections to keep traffic moving and avoid crashes. Drivers, pedestrians, and bicycle riders must obey these signals except when an officer is directing traffic. Stop on the stop line if your car is nearest the signal. Some signals change only when a car is at the stop line. If traffic signals are out of order, stop as you would for a four-way stop sign.

Watch for "stop sign ahead" signs. When you come to this sign, slow down and be ready to stop at the stop sign ahead.

When you are forced to stop, three things must happen. You must perceive the hazard or warning; you must react to the hazard; and you must use your brakes to stop.

The length of time you take to identify, predict, and decide to slow for a hazard is called your perception time. You cannot consistently estimate your perception time because your ability to perceive will change from time to time. By scanning and maintaining the proper spacing method, you will perceive hazards earlier and allow yourself more reaction time.

Once you know a hazard exists, the length of time you take to execute your actions is your reaction time. An average driver's reaction time is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of one second in clinical laboratory settings, but reaction

time in the driving environment is an average of 1.5 seconds. If you are impaired due to alcohol, drugs or fatigue, your reaction time will increase; thus the time required to stop and the distance that your car travels before stopping will also increase.

The distance your vehicle travels from the time you apply the brakes until your vehicle stops is called braking distance. This distance will change depending on your driving abilities, your vehicle's condition, and the conditions of the road. Estimating stopping distance can be difficult, so it is better to utilize the two second rule. This rule enables you to project your approximate stopping distance under ideal conditions at any speed.

Don't forget - the higher the speed, the longer the braking distance. At higher speeds, you will have a harder time controlling your vehicle. A vehicle with worn tires or bad brakes needs a longer distance to stop. Check your tires frequently for low air or worn tread. If the brakes on one side of your car are worn or out of adjustment, your vehicle may pull to one side in a stop – if this happens, get the brakes checked immediately. If you panic and slam on your brakes you might lose control of your car in an emergency situation. Be alert at all times, but stay calm in an emergency. Remember, wet road surfaces will reduce traction on the road and increase your braking distance. Reduce your speed if it begins to rain during your drive.

The term "defensive driving" means common sense driving. It's a strategy for survival. 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.

Key points to becoming a successful defensive driver:

- Control your emotions
- Look ahead
- Don't tailgate
- Allow room to maneuver
- Never insist on the right of way
- Always ask yourself, "what if..."
- Stay alert
- Pass safely