

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Arrested After Crash Kills Two

An 18-year-old Florida man was arrested after his vehicle rear-ended another vehicle and pushed it into the path of a third vehicle. Two people, including a two-year-old boy, were killed, and three other people were in critical condition.

Source: MSNBC.msn.com ♦

Lessons Learned

Being too close to other vehicles is very dangerous. When you follow another vehicle too closely, you make it difficult for you and for the other driver to handle potentially hazardous situations.

When you are forced to stop, three things must happen: you must perceive the hazard or warning, react, and 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

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your ability to perceive will change from time to time. By scanning and maintaining enough space between your vehicle and other vehicles on the road, you allow yourself more reaction time.

Once you see a hazard, you will cover a certain amount of space before you are able to stop, due to reaction distance and braking distance. Reaction time is the amount of time you take to execute your response to the hazard. In the driving environment, your reaction time is about 1.5 seconds. At 50 mph, you will travel at least 110 feet between the time you see the hazard and start braking. The distance your vehicle travels from the time you apply the brakes until your vehicle stops is called braking distance. Braking distance depends on your ability at the time, your vehicle conditions, and the conditions of the road. At 50 mph, your braking distance will be about 158 feet. So your total stopping distance (reaction distance + braking distance) will be about 268 feet. If you are following too closely, you may not have enough space to stop if the car ahead of you has to stop suddenly.

When you are following another vehicle in your lane, you should allow a two-second cushion of space between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. Pick out a stationary object ahead of the car in front of you. Choose an item that enables you to start counting when the lead vehicle passes that spot. Count two full seconds: one-thousand-and-one, one-thousand-and-two. If you finish counting before you reach the object, you are following at a reasonable distance. If you pass the object before you finish counting, you are too close. Slow down and check your following distance again.

Teen Rescued from Sinking Vehicle

A 17-year-old boy was rescued from his vehicle after it overturned in icy water. Police believe speed and slippery road conditions were factors in his vehicle running off the road and into the water.

Source: *WWMT.com*◆

Lessons Learned

The single most important rule in any emergency is do not panic. You have a better chance of handling the emergency safely if you do not let fear take over. In most emergencies, you will have a second or two to think before you act.

If a vehicle goes into water, it will usually float for a while, and you should have time to get out before it starts sinking. Unfasten your seat belt and escape through a window. Opening a door would cause water to rush in, and the car could overturn on top of you.

If the vehicle sinks before you can get out, climb into the rear seat. An air pocket may form there as the weight of the engine pulls the vehicle down nose first. When the vehicle settles, take a breath and escape through a window. As you rise, air pressure will build in your lungs. Let it out in small breaths through your nose or lips as you surface. Do not hold your breath tightly or try to blow air out; just allow the air to escape naturally.

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.

Preparing your vehicle for driving in harsh winter weather isn't difficult.

1. While your engine is cold, inspect your antifreeze by using a tester to check the mixture for its freeze point. A 50/50 ratio means 50% distilled water and 50% antifreeze, which is enough in most climates, except in extreme cold.
2. Getting stranded in the cold is no fun! Starting your car in cold weather makes the battery work much harder, so have your charging system checked by a reliable professional.
3. Change your oil and oil filter, using high quality engine oil. To protect your motor in cold start situations, use the oil recommended by the vehicle manufacturer.
4. Make a visual inspection of all lights, marker bulbs, tail lights, and third level brake lights, especially headlights and driving lights. Daylight savings time means bulbs work longer hours.
5. Winter driving requires good traction in snow and ice, so check your tire tread condition. Quality tires shed snow, ice and road grime more quickly, providing better traction for improved safety. Check your tire pressure often, especially in colder temperatures. For maximum traction, follow the recommended PSI found on the driver's side doorpost.
6. Visibility is the key to your safety. Road salt and slush can jeopardize visibility, so make sure that your wiper blades are in top condition, and able to fully clear your windshield, and back window. To avoid the chiseling of ice early in the morning, use washer fluid that contains de-icer and Rain-X Treatment on windows.

Ready to get your Learners Permit?



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Police Seek Driver of Hit-and-Run

A 16-year-old boy suffered minor injuries after being hit by a car. The driver of the car gave the boy \$40 for his broken skateboard, then left the scene; police are looking for the driver.

Source: *GloucesterTimes.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

In the United States in 2004, pedestrian fatalities accounted for 11 percent of all fatalities from motor vehicle crashes. A total of 4,641 pedestrians were killed and 68,000 were injured. Single motor vehicle crashes accounted for over 90 percent of all pedestrian fatalities. On average, one pedestrian is killed in a traffic crash every 113 minutes and one pedestrian is injured in a traffic crash every eight minutes.

Most pedestrian fatalities occurred in urban areas (72 percent), at non-intersection locations (79 percent), in normal weather conditions (89 percent), and at night (66 percent). Nearly half of all pedestrian fatalities occurred on the weekend (Friday-Sunday). Nearly half of the fatalities occurred between 6:00 p.m. and midnight.

Thirty-four percent of pedestrians killed in 2004 in the US had a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or greater. Thirteen percent of the drivers involved in the fatal crashes were under the influence of alcohol.

Of all the highway users, pedestrians are the most vulnerable. Drivers must watch for and protect pedestrians. Many pedestrians who do not drive are not fully aware of all the traffic laws and signals. They may not understand the distance required for a motor vehicle to stop. They may assume that drivers will yield the right-of-way to anyone in the crosswalk.

When a pedestrian crosses at an intersection with a green light, she or he may not even look for oncoming traffic. Pedestrians waiting to cross the street often stand in the street instead of on the curb. They may even dash across the street without warning. 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.

Children and the elderly are the pedestrians who are most at risk. Children may act impulsively and run into traffic without thinking. The elderly make take longer to cross the street. They may not be able to see or hear well, making them unaware of possible dangers.

Never assume that pedestrians will move out of the way. In some situations, you may have to stop to allow a pedestrian to cross safely.

Always watch for pedestrians when leaving an alley or driveway. Stop before crossing the sidewalk and look both ways. You may encounter joggers on the street; if the jogger is facing away from you and wearing a music headset, she or he may not hear you coming. Pass with caution.

The moment you step from your vehicle, you are a pedestrian. The knowledge you have about driving will make you more aware of possible problems and conflicts with pedestrians.

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. Follow these steps to avoid crashes:

1. Look for possible danger. Think about what might happen. If there are children playing near the road, plan what you will do if one child runs or rides into the street.
2. Understand what can be done to prevent a crash.
3. Act in time. Once you have seen a dangerous situation, act right away to prevent a crash.

Use these defensive driving tips if you see that you are about to be involved in a crash:

- It is better to swerve right instead of toward oncoming traffic to prevent a crash.
- Hitting a row of bushes is better than hitting a tree, post or solid object.
- Hitting a vehicle moving in the same direction as you are is better than hitting a vehicle head-on.
- It is better to drive off the road than skid off when avoiding a crash.
- It is better to hit something that is not moving instead of a vehicle that is moving toward you.



Want to pass your DMV Exam the first time?

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The advertisement features a photograph of a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, sitting at a desk and smiling while looking at a laptop. The background is a warm, brownish-orange color.

Teen Arrested for Drinking and Driving After Crash

An 18-year-old man was arrested after his vehicle ran off the road and hit a tree in someone's front yard. The man ran from the scene; when police caught up with him, they noticed he had been drinking and arrested him.

Source: *WIBW.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that alcohol was involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes and in seven percent of all crashes in 2004. The 16,694 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes during 2004 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 31 minutes. An estimated 248,000 persons were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present - an average of one person injured every approximately every two minutes.

In 2004, 86 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in crashes in which at least one driver or non-occupant had a BAC of .08 or greater. Sixty-nine percent of the 14,409 people killed in such crashes were intoxicated.

The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes is more than three times as high at night as during the day. For all crashes, the rate of alcohol involvement is five times higher at night. In 2004, 30 percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 51 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 5 percent during the week and 12 percent during the weekend.

Economic costs of alcohol-related traffic collisions come from:

- property damage – to vehicles, roads, road signs, barriers such as guardrails, etc.
- emergency and acute health care costs
- long-term care and rehabilitation
- costs associated with travel delays, such as when a lane of traffic is closed for clean-up after a collision
- legal and court costs
- police and emergency services
- insurance administration costs

- disability and workers' compensation
- social services for those who cannot return to work and support their families

In 2000, alcohol-involved crashes resulted in \$50.9 billion in economic costs, accounting for 22 percent of all crash costs. The impact of alcohol involvement increases with injury severity. Alcohol-involved crashes accounted for 10 percent of property damage only crash costs, 21 percent of nonfatal injury crash costs, and 46 percent of fatal injury crash costs.

Drinking alcoholic beverages and using other drugs is widely accepted in our society. Drinking and other drug use is often portrayed as glamorous and sophisticated in the media. Yet the use of alcohol and other drugs can be very costly when combined with driving. Many collisions involve drivers who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs; the costs include property damage, legal problems, injury and death.

All states now enforce a minimum drinking age of 21. In 2002, an estimated 917 lives were saved due to minimum drinking age laws. In recent years, the rate of alcohol-related vehicle fatalities has declined. But alcohol-related crashes are still a top safety problem.

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.

When a person consumes alcohol, most of the alcohol is not digested. It is absorbed directly and quickly into the bloodstream through the lining of the stomach and small intestines. Once alcohol enters the bloodstream, it circulates to the brain. Since the absorption of alcohol begins as soon as drinking begins, it reaches the drinker's brain within minutes. Alcohol has the 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. But the driver may believe that thinking and judging abilities are sharper and quicker than usual. Alcohol is a depressant; it slows down the body and mind.