

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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One Teen Killed When Another Runs Stop Sign

A 17-year-old boy was killed when the vehicle he was driving was broadsided by an SUV driven by another teen, who apparently ran a stop sign. His three passengers were hospitalized with injuries.

Source: CBS2.com ♦

Lessons Learned

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.

Stop signs are always octagonal (8-sided). A stop sign means that you must bring your vehicle to a complete halt at the marked stop line. If there is no marked stop line, stop before entering the crosswalk on the near side of the intersection. If there is no crosswalk, stop at a point nearest the intersecting roadway where you

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have a clear view of approaching traffic on the intersecting roadway before entering the intersection.

You must yield the right-of-way to all other traffic and pedestrians at stop signs. Move forward only when the road is clear.

A 4-Way Stop sign means that there are four stop signs at the intersection. Traffic from all four directions must stop. The first vehicle to reach the intersection should move forward first. If two vehicles reach the intersection at the same time, the driver on the left yields to the driver on the right.

How to Prevent Serious Injuries in a Crash

Wear your safety belt and shoulder harness properly. 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. Seat belts keep you from being thrown against others in the vehicle. Seat belts also keep you from being thrown against parts of your vehicle, such as the steering wheel or windshield. They keep the driver behind the wheel, where he or she can control the vehicle.

Wear a shoulder belt only with a lap belt. Wear your safety belt every time you get in your vehicle, not just for long trips or on 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.

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Speed, Fog Cause Crash That Kills Teen

A 16-year-old boy was killed in a single-vehicle crash caused by speed and foggy weather. The teen died when his vehicle struck a tree.

Source: *JacksonvilleProgress.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Be especially careful of patches of fog in valleys and low-lying areas. It is best not to drive in fog or smoke. If you must, slow down, turn on your low beam headlights, and be ready for a fast stop. Use windshield wipers in heavy fog. If the fog or smoke becomes so thick that you cannot see well enough to keep driving, pull off the road until conditions improve. Pull over as far to the right as possible, off the main travel portion of the roadway. Leave your parking lights on and activate your hazard lights. If you must keep driving, drive slowly, but keep your vehicle moving. Never drive with only your parking lights on. Be alert for slow-moving or stopped traffic. Check your rearview mirrors frequently for vehicles that are approaching quickly from the rear.

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.

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.

Fog also reduces your ability to judge distance. Oncoming vehicles may be closer than you think. Be alert and be prepared to slow down. If necessary, pull off the pavement until conditions improve. Remember to turn on your emergency flashers to warn other drivers that you are stopped.

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.

Higher speeds reduce maneuverability, increase stopping distances, and decrease reaction time. Problems caused by increased speed are often magnified in adverse conditions, such as poor

visibility or on wet or snowy roads. At sufficiently high speeds, the physical limits of the vehicle or roadway may be exceeded.

The economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is estimated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to be \$40.4 billion per year. In 2005, speeding was a contributing factor in 30 percent of all fatal crashes and 13,113 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes. The 2000 costs of speeding-related crashes were estimated to be \$40.4 billion a year, or \$76,865 per minute, or \$1,281 per second.

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?



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Teen Injured in Alcohol-related Crash

A 17-year-old girl was pulled away from her burning vehicle by two off-duty police officers after a rollover crash. She was later ticketed for driving under the influence of alcohol, improper lane usage, and not having a valid driver's license.

Source: *News-Gazette.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.

The 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. Even non-drinkers will interact with impaired drivers on the roadway. Everyone who drives needs to know the importance of non-drinking.

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 even 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.



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Teen Suffers Head Injuries When Vehicle Hits Pole

An 18-year-old man suffered head injuries in a crash police say was probably caused when the rear end of his car lost traction because the driver was speeding. The car left the road and struck a utility pole.

Source: *MetroWestDailyNews.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

If your vehicle skids, respond quickly and calmly. A vehicle skids when the tires lose their grip on the pavement. Slippery surfaces combined with a sudden movement may cause your vehicle 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 and do not use your brakes, unless you are about to hit something. Steer into the direction of the skid to straighten the vehicle out. Be prepared to countersteer, if necessary, to straighten the vehicle out, but take care not to overcorrect. 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 vehicle 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 harder it will be to come 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.

Too few drivers view speeding as an immediate risk to their personal safety or the safety of others. But crash severity increases with the speed of the vehicle at impact. Inversely, the effectiveness of restraint devices like air bags and safety belts, and vehicular construction features such as crumple zones and side member beams, decline as impact speed increases.

The probability of death, disfigurement, or debilitating injury increases with higher speed at impact. Such consequences double for every 10 mph over 50 mph that a vehicle travels.

Many drivers don't consider this. They slow their speed in residential areas, or when the weather turns bad. To them, a few miles an hour over the posted speed limit is an acceptable risk. Their excuse - other drivers do it. They believe the worst that can

happen to them is to receive a speeding ticket. Drivers like this are wrong. Maybe even dead wrong, because driving too fast for conditions or exceeding the posted speed limit can kill YOU.

In 2000, 593,000 people in the US received minor injuries in speeding-related crashes. An additional 71,000 people received moderate injuries and 39,000 received serious to critical injuries in speeding-related crashes.

For drivers involved in fatal crashes, young males are the most likely to be speeding. The relative proportion of speeding-related crashes to all crashes decreases with increasing driver age. In 2005, 38% of the male drivers 15 to 20 years old who were involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash.

Speeding was a factor in 28% of the fatal crashes that occurred on dry roads in 2005 and 33% of those that occurred on wet roads.

Speeding was involved in 27 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones in 2005.

In 2005, 86% of speeding related fatalities in the US occurred on roads that were not Interstate highways.

For both speeding and non-speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes, the percentage of those who had been drinking, with BAC 0.01 or greater, at the time the crash occurred was higher at night than during the day. Between midnight and 3 am, 75 percent of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.

The faster we drive, the further it will take us to stop. Your mental and physical conditions are very important.

Your age, use of drugs including some prescription and over-the-counter medications, and physical fatigue will all affect your ability to react to a potential hazard, or perception and reaction time. Reaction time in daily driving averages 1.5 seconds with various driving distractions.

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.

Road and weather conditions must be considered. Conditions such as wet roads or roads made of gravel reduce traction and increase stopping distance.