

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

Volume 83, Issue 45

April 2008

## Teen Killed When Car Hits Tree

An 18-year-old man was killed when he lost control of his vehicle and swerved off the road, hitting a tree head-on. Police said speed and alcohol were probable factors in the crash; the man was not wearing a seat belt.

Source: *CourierPostOnline.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Drivers who have been drinking are much more likely to be involved in a crash than those who have not, even those with a lot of experience.

The first thing to be affected by alcohol is your judgment. When you drink, both your thinking and your reasoning become impaired. You can tell just by the fact that once you have one drink, you're more likely to have another and then another. You become less likely to consider the consequences of your actions. You underestimate the risks of being on the road, and

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Published by the National Safety Commission  
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overestimate your ability to tolerate alcohol.

When your judgment is affected, you're less likely to compensate for your other losses, vision and reaction time, by driving more carefully than usual. So the fact that you are judging the situation from an impaired mindset leads one to make a decision that could be dangerous, as you then make the "impaired decision" to get behind the wheel. The choice to get behind the wheel in this case was affected by alcohol, and the consequences were not considered.

After your judgment, the next thing alcohol affects is your reaction time. You become physically slower and less alert. It takes you longer to hit the brake but, because your judgment is impaired, you're not likely to increase your following distance in order to compensate. You process information slower, which affects your perception of traffic situations.

Finally, alcohol affects your vision, relaxing the muscles that focus and move the eyes, causing your vision to become distorted. Your perception of distance is affected. You have a hard time judging how close you are to other vehicles or traffic signals. Your pupils take longer to adjust to changes in light, so you're more vulnerable to being blinded by the glare of headlights.

Your eye muscles may even relax to the point that you can't focus, your vision becomes fuzzy and you see a double image.

When you drink, your bad driving habits become more pronounced. Imagine yourself on the road after having one drink. If a person runs out in front of your car, can you stop in time?

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## Memorial Held for Teen Who Drowned in Crash

Hundreds of people were expected to attend a memorial March 29 for a teen who drowned when the car she was riding in plunged into a river. The 17-year-old and a 15-year-old friend were unable to escape the vehicle. The driver had been drinking alcohol and was text-messaging when the crash occurred.

Source: *KONP.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Most vehicles will float on the surface of water from 30 to 60 seconds.

If your vehicle enters deep water, make every attempt to get out of the vehicle immediately. If possible, exit the vehicle through open windows before the water reaches the window level.

If your vehicle becomes submerged, try not to panic. Vehicle doors cannot be opened until water pressure inside the car is equal to that outside. When the vehicle is completely filled, doors can be opened, if there is no structural damage.

The weight of the engine will cause the front end of the car to sink first. The rear passenger compartment may provide an air pocket while you plan your escape strategy. If there are other people in the vehicle, determine their condition and try to exit the vehicle together.

Impaired driving is the leading cause of brain injury and paralysis in the United States. 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 2005. The 16,885 fatalities in alcohol-related crashes during 2005 represent an average of one alcohol-related fatality every 31 minutes. An estimated 254,000 persons were injured in crashes where police reported that alcohol was present - an average of one person injured approximately every two minutes.

The amount of alcohol that resides in your system is measured by your Blood Alcohol Concentration or BAC.

Of the 16,885 people who died in alcohol-related crashes in 2005, 14,539 (86%) were killed in crashes where at least one driver or non-occupant had a BAC of .08 or higher. Of the 14,539 people

killed in such crashes, 71 percent were drivers or non-occupants with BAC levels at or above .08.

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 2005, 30 percent of all fatal crashes during the week were alcohol-related, compared to 52 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 5 percent during the week and 12 percent during the weekend.

When a person drinks an alcoholic beverage, about 20 percent of the alcohol is absorbed in the stomach and about 80 percent is absorbed in the small intestine. How fast the alcohol is absorbed depends upon several factors:

- The concentration of alcohol in the beverage - The greater the concentration, the more the absorption.
- The type of drink - Carbonated beverages tend to speed up the absorption of alcohol.
- Whether the stomach is empty or full - Food slows down alcohol absorption.

After absorption, the alcohol enters the bloodstream and dissolves in the water of the blood. The blood carries the alcohol throughout the body. The alcohol from the blood then enters and dissolves in the water inside each tissue of the body (except fat tissue, since alcohol cannot dissolve in fat). Once inside the tissues, alcohol exerts its effects on the body. The observed effects depend directly on the blood alcohol concentration (B.A.C.), which is related to the amount of alcohol consumed. The B.A.C. can rise significantly within 20 minutes after having a drink.



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## Teen Killed in Rollover Crash

An 18-year-old man died in a rollover crash when the driver lost control of the vehicle. The driver suffered serious head injuries. Speed and alcohol were factors in the crash.

Source: *KKTV.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Speeding reduces a driver's ability to steer safely around curves on the highway or avoid objects in the roadway. It extends the distance necessary to stop the vehicle, increases the distance a vehicle travels while a driver reacts, and reduces the effectiveness of the vehicle's safety features. The faster the vehicle is traveling, the greater the impact if the vehicle does crash. Inversely, the effectiveness of restraint devices like airbags and safety belts and vehicular construction features such as crumple zones and side member beams decline as impact speed increases. The probability of a disfiguring or debilitating injury or death increases with higher speed on impact.

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. The economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is estimated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to be 40.4 billion dollars 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.

Speeding was a factor in 28 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred on dry roads in 2005 and in 33 percent of those that occurred on wet roads. Speeding was involved in nearly one-third (27 percent) of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones. Eighty-six percent of speeding-related fatalities occurred on roads that were not interstate highways.

Alcohol and speeding are clearly a deadly combination. Alcohol involvement is prevalent for drivers involved in speeding-related crashes. In 2005, 40 percent of the intoxicated drivers (.08 BAC or higher) involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared to only 14 percent of the sober drivers (0.00 BAC) involved in fatal crashes.

For both speeding and non-speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes, the percentage of those who had a BAC of .01 or greater at the time the crash occurred was higher at night than during the day. Between midnight and 3:00 a.m., 75 percent of speeding drivers

involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.

In a 2002 survey, the NHTSA found that speeding is a pervasive behavior, with about three-quarters of drivers in the survey reporting they drove over the speed limit on all types of roads within the past month.

As you drive down the street while under the influence of alcohol (or drugs that affect reaction time - as any depressant will), you are less likely to react to the car backing out of the driveway or the light changing to red, or the guy on the bike falling off of the curb in front of you, so you hit the car coming out of the driveway, or run the red light, or run over the guy that fell down in front of you! Forget about passing a slower moving vehicle. It can't be done while impaired - you cannot judge the speed of the other car, nor can you properly gauge the distance that you need to travel while passing. Then to factor in the speed - it cannot be done! The reaction time aspect combined with the judgment would be bad enough to make this a potentially dangerous situation, but the other major factor involved here is the fact that you cannot see properly while trying to perform all of the other tasks required to safely operate your motor vehicle.

After one drink, your motor skills have been affected. Your ability to think and see has clearly diminished. After two or three drinks, your decision making skills are seriously hampered, your attention span decreases and you take longer to think and longer to react. What if a child chases a ball out into the street? Will you be able to react and stop in time?

As harmless as it may seem, drinking alcohol can lead to other more serious consequences. When you drink your judgment diminishes and your ability to make good choices is impaired. People who drink have a tendency to make poor decisions which can lead to use or abuse other drugs. Under the influence of alcohol people get more daring and more willing to try things they would never try if they didn't drink. That's why alcohol is considered a Gateway Drug.

Gateway drugs are substances that people take which, in many cases, lead to those people taking more drugs. Once you've broken the barrier, it somehow becomes easier to do the next thing down the line.



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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 working on a laptop. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a simple indoor setting with a bookshelf.

## Teen Has High-speed Crash Weeks after Getting License

A 17-year-old boy faces possible criminal charges after a high-speed crash which killed one friend and left a second in a medically-induced coma. Police said the driver was going up to 70 mph in a 35-mph zone and had violated a graduated-licensing law.

Source: *PressDemocrat.com* ♦

### Lessons Learned

In every vehicle crash, there are actually three collisions:

1. The vehicle's collision
2. The human collision
3. The human body's collision

#### The Vehicle's Collision

When a vehicle crashes into another vehicle or a solid, immovable object, it crushes, absorbing some of the force of the collision.

#### The Human Collision

The second collision is the human collision. The impact of this collision is analogous to Newton's Second Law. At the moment of impact, the driver and passengers in the vehicle are still traveling at the vehicle's original speed. When the vehicle comes to a complete stop, the occupants continue to be hurled forward until they come in contact with some part of the vehicle, such as the steering wheel, dashboard, front window, or back of the front seat. 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.

#### The Human Body's Collision

In a crash, the internal organs are still moving even after a human body comes to a complete stop. The internal organs can slam into other organs of the skeletal system. This internal collision is often the cause of serious injury or death. For example, a person's head might collide with the windshield of the car during the second collision. The still-moving brain then collides with the inside of the skull,

causing swelling and/or bleeding. This is the third collision. As total mass and speed of the vehicle(s) involved in a motor vehicle crash increase, there is a proportionate increase in the opportunity for injury to the human body, both externally and internally.

#### 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.

The energy absorbed by a vehicle in a crash is highly variable. Energy is absorbed by:

1. vehicle design
2. the area of the vehicle struck
3. the type of material struck
4. the support in that area of the vehicle

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 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. But 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.