

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Distracted by Kids, Teen Crashes into Pole

A 19-year-old woman, possibly distracted by three children under the age of six in her car, crashed into a telephone pole, injuring all four. One of the children was not in a child safety seat as required by law.

Source: *News.BostonHerald.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Hazardous acts include the following:

Aggressive driving/road rage - Speeding, tailgating, running red lights, running stop signs, unsafe maneuvers, riding on the shoulder, and a general disregard of public or personal safety are all signs of aggressive driving. Road rage occurs when drivers allow the aggressive driving committed by them or others to affect their driving and judgment, letting their anger get the best of them and turning their automobiles into 3,000 pound weapons.

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for Teens and their Parents



Cellular phones - Cell phones distract drivers, preventing them from driving in a safe manner. Dialing, searching for a number, or even reaching for the phone can distract the driver just long enough to cause a crash. In addition to cell phones, drivers can have computers and wireless faxes installed in their vehicles, making their vehicles virtual offices, places to work and not drive. It is very dangerous to try to work and drive at the same time.

Drowsiness: 37% of the driving population says they have nodded off for at least a moment or fallen asleep while driving at some time in their life. An estimated 7.5 million drivers have fallen asleep while driving within the last month. While some hold the perception that drowsy driving occurs mostly late at night or in the early morning hours, just 28% of drivers reporting a recent drowsy driving experience report this experience occurring between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m. More than one-third (35%) of drivers who nodded off while driving within the past six months say their last experience occurred between 6:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. An additional 17% report they nodded off between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Dealing with children: Nearly one in four (24%) drivers deal with children in the back seat of the car while driving. This behavior can be especially distracting if the driver actually turns around to adjust the occupants or pick up a lost toy or offer food.

Eating or drinking: Half of all drivers (49%) report eating or drinking at least occasionally while driving, with 14% doing so on three-quarters or more of their driving trips.

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## Teen Gets Probation for Causing Deadly Crash

A 17-year-old boy received three years' probation, a \$500 fine, and a four-year driver's license revocation for causing a crash that killed a 19-year-old man and his 20-year-old girlfriend. The teen was traveling 80 mph in a 40 mph zone when he crashed into the man's car.

Source: NJ.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.

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. Some examples of when you may need to adjust your speed follow.

Heavy rain reduces your ability to see and be seen. At times it may almost blind you. Turn on your windshield wipers, low beam headlights, and defroster if needed. Reduce your speed.

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.

Dawn and dusk are also environmental hazards. Shadows and the lack of light from other vehicles and from streetlights can make distinguishing details very difficult. Try to make your vehicle more visible to others. Turn on your low beam headlights, not so that you can see better, but so others can see you better.

Although expressways are built to keep traffic moving, conditions sometimes slow or halt the flow of traffic. One of these conditions is highway construction. Watch for warning signs that are in place ahead of the construction area. The closer you get to the construction area, the more you need to slow down. Be sure to obey all special speed limitations. Lighted signboards or cones may appear as you get closer to the construction area. These may reduce the number of traffic lanes. Check your mirrors and your blind spots

before merging to be sure that the lane is clear. Trucks and other equipment may be using part or all of your traffic lane. Be aware of trucks pulling away from the area. They may leave mud or sand on the road. Slow down, steer gently and obey workers' instructions. Be especially careful of workers and equipment operators who may not see you. Always use an extra space cushion to protect them.

An expressway crash may block one or more lanes. When you see a problem ahead, check your mirrors for traffic behind you, flash your brake lights and slow down gradually. Watch for emergency personnel and police officers directing traffic.

If you can go around the crash scene, proceed cautiously. Do not stop unless otherwise directed. Do not slow down to a crawl to look at the crash. You will only slow traffic and you could cause another crash.

The posted speed limit may be too fast for night driving. Be sure to turn your headlights on as soon as the sun sets. 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.



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## Teen Bicyclist Hurt in Hit-and-run Crash

A 14-year-old boy was seriously injured after being hit by a car that left the scene. The boy pulled into the path of the car, which then fled the scene of the crash.

Source: *MySuncoast.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

If you are involved in a traffic crash, you must do the following:

**1. Stop.** If you are in a crash while driving, you must stop. If anyone is hurt, you must get help. You must also be ready to give your name, address, and vehicle registration number, as well as show your driver license to others involved in the crash.

**2. Report the crash.** If the crash causes injury, death, or property damage, it must be reported. Call local law enforcement.

**3. Move your vehicle if it is blocking traffic.** If your vehicle is blocking the flow of traffic, you must move it. If you cannot move it yourself, you must get help or call a tow truck.

**4. Appear in court.** If you are charged in a crash, you may have to go to court. The officer who comes to the scene of the crash will file charges against any driver who violated a traffic law. If you are charged, you will have a chance to explain what happened to the court. The court will then decide on a penalty. Those who are not charged with violating the law may have to come to court as witnesses.

### Crash Involving an Unattended Vehicle

If, while driving, you hit a vehicle with no one in it or if you damage any object that belongs to someone else, you must tell the owner. Give the owner your name, address, and license plate number in person or in a note attached to the object that was hit. Report the crash immediately to the proper law enforcement agency.

### Sharing the Road with a Bicycle

As the driver of a larger vehicle, give a bicycle extra space whenever possible. Some riders may not be able to control their bicycles well and may suddenly get in your path. Other cyclists may swerve into your path for a variety of reasons that you may not be aware of, such as potholes, puddles, and storm drains. If you can predict a possible change of direction, you may be able to stop in time to avoid a crash. Be sure to give extra

space to young riders, riders who seem inexperienced, riders who may have been drinking and older riders.

As you start to pass a bicyclist, approach slowly and try not to frighten the rider. Reduce your speed if the roadway is narrow. If you do not have this much space, wait for a gap in the oncoming traffic before you pass. Remember to signal to the traffic behind you to let them know you are changing lanes.

If you are unable to pass right away, make sure you don't follow the bicyclist too closely. If you are too close and the cyclist has to lay their bike down on the road in an emergency, you could run over the cyclist.

At night, use your low beam headlights. High beam headlights will temporarily blind a bicyclist.

When you parallel park, check for bicyclists before opening a street-side door.

### When You Ride a Bicycle

Persons riding bicycles or mopeds on a roadway have the same rights (with certain exceptions) and duties as motor vehicle drivers and may be ticketed for traffic violations.

Bicyclists must obey all traffic controls and signals. An adult bicyclist may carry a child in a backpack or sling, child seat or trailer designed to carry children. You may not allow a passenger to remain in a child seat or carrier when you are not in immediate control of the bicycle.

Keep at least one hand on the handlebars. On the roadway, check behind you before changing lanes. If you are not traveling at the speed of other traffic, stay on the right-most portion of the roadway except when passing, making a left turn, avoiding hazards, or when a lane is too narrow for you and a vehicle to share it safely.

Do not ride two abreast when this will impede the flow of traffic. Signal your intent to turn to other vehicle operators by pointing in the direction you are going to turn. Do not wear headphones or any other listening device except a hearing aid while bicycling. Do not ride a bicycle when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.



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The advertisement features a woman sitting at a desk with a laptop, smiling. The text is overlaid on a dark background.

## Teen Pleads Guilty in Fatal Crash

An 18-year-old man says he was drunk when his car crashed into another vehicle, killing an 86-year-old man. The teen pled guilty to vehicular manslaughter but has not yet been sentenced.

Source: *Fox44.net* ♦

## Lessons Learned

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. However, the driver may believe that thinking and judging abilities are sharper and quicker than usual. Some people believe that they can do things better after one or two drinks. One common effect of alcohol on behavior is a feeling of wellbeing. This feeling is known as euphoria. Euphoria can make a person feel energized and confident. Alcohol-induced euphoria can cause people to take chances they normally would not take. But this behavior can be deadly behind the wheel of a vehicle, because euphoria is only a state of mind. Alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the working of the nervous system. Thinking and judging abilities are duller and slower than usual.

Alcohol quickly diminishes the drinker's 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 and 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 a person's personality that restrain one's impulsive behavior. For example, a driver who is under the influence might attempt a left turn in front of traffic that he or she would not attempt when sober. A driver's inhibitions weaken as the alcohol content in the body increases. A person who is drinking may drive too fast, take needless risks, or even drive into emergency situations without realizing what is happening.

As more alcohol enters the bloodstream, the area of the brain that controls muscular movements 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 oversteer, brake late or not brake at all. The driver might not be able to negotiate turns properly and safely. Reaction time may be doubled and reflexes will be slower. These actions can cause drinking drivers to be involved in serious crashes.

A driver who has been drinking may not be able to react to a situation that a sober driver could easily handle. Even if the drinking driver is able to react, he or she may not do the right thing, or may react too late, resulting in an accident that the sober driver would have been able to avoid. Alcohol makes it difficult for any driver to react to complex driving situations. In a complex driving situation, more than one thing demands the driver's attention. For example, as a driver approaches a traffic light, a pedestrian may step off the curb to cross the street ahead. As the traffic light changes, a motorcyclist might change lanes suddenly in front of the driver.

Alcohol affects a driver's ability to see clearly. Night vision, peripheral vision, color vision, and depth perception are all impaired. Visual acuity, sharpness of vision, and peripheral vision are also reduced.

Alcohol does not affect one person the same way in all situations. The same person could have two different reactions to alcohol on two separate occasions.