

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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NSC Debuts New Web Site to Promote Safe Driving Practices

Statistics from The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration show that vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death and serious injury for teenagers.

That's why Colonel Christopher A. Knight (ret.), Executive Director of the National Safety Commission (NSC) and former Director of the Florida Highway Patrol, recently announced a new course developed to emphasize driving safety for teenagers, found at SafeDriver.com.

"Teen drivers lack experience behind the wheel, said Knight. "Many develop a comfort level while driving where they fall into an 'It Won't Happen to Me' syndrome. It's a mindset where teen drivers believe there's no chance that he or she will be involved in a traffic crash."

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To help improve young people's awareness of the serious responsibility that comes with operating an automobile, the NSC is introducing an online driver improvement training course proven to reduce repeat crashes and moving violations.

By enrolling in the guided Teen Injury Prevention course, young adults will learn:

- general safe driving techniques
- road rules
- regulations, including speed limits and seat belt laws

Parents are sent an electronic NSC approved certificate upon completion of the 40-question final exam.

A leader in safety training, the National Safety Commission provides courses to consumers and businesses in all 50 states and over a dozen countries. Believing that "Safety is No Accident," the NSC aims to increase awareness of important safety issues that deal with highway and traffic safety information.

"As a parent of a teen driver, I'm concerned with the careless and unsafe driving habits," said Colonel Knight. "This new course reminds teenagers that they are not invincible. They could become a statistic if they do not develop safe driving habits now."

For more information about the Teen Injury Prevention course, including a Driver Education Book for Parents, Monthly Teen Driving Newsletter, and a Parent/Teen Driving Contract, visit www.safedriver.com.

Florida Teen Killed in High-Speed Crash

An 18-year-old Florida high-school student was killed when he lost control of his car and crashed into a tree. Police say the car was traveling at a high rate of speed.

Source: *FloridaToday.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

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

To maintain control of your car, you must understand the effects of these forces. By staying alert and ready to act, you can apply what you know and reduce possible conflicts.

Have you ever wondered what happens inside a car when it crashes? People at crash test labs do. They spend hour after hour measuring, testing and analyzing. They've found that in every car crash, there are actually three collisions.

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

The second collision is the "human collision". At the moment of impact, the driver and passengers in the car are still traveling at the vehicle's original speed. When the car comes to a stop, the driver and passengers continue to be hurled forward until they come in contact with some part of the automobile, such as the steering wheel, the dashboard and the front window, or the back of the front seat. Humans can also cause serious injuries to other humans when they collide with each other.

In a crash, even after a human body comes to a complete stop, the internal organs are still moving. When they stop moving, these internal organs slam into other organs of the skeletal system. This "internal collision" often causes serious injury or death. Imagine what happens when someone's head collides with the windshield of a car. After the person stops moving, the brain hits the inside of the skull. This could result in a range of injuries, from a mild concussion to permanent brain damage.

New Website Stresses Safe Driving Habits

The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles unveiled a new Web site to reach out to teens about the importance of safety when behind the wheel.

The Web site www.takethewheel.net includes written and video testimonials from teens talking about their close calls in vehicle crashes.

"Keeping teens safe is our greatest responsibility," said Electra Theodorides-Bustle, executive director of DHSMV.

Over 36,000 teen drivers (age 15-19) were involved in crashes in Florida last year, according to the site.

Information about drunk driving and distractions, as well as quizzes of Florida's traffic-safety laws, can be found on the site.

The site was funded by a \$100,000 grant from the Florida Department of Transportation's safety office.

Brandon Donaldson, 16, was headed to the movies with a friend. When they hit 80 mph, the car hydroplaned. Donaldson, who was not wearing his seat belt, was thrown from the car. Incredibly, he only has a few scars to show from the crash.

Recently, Donaldson, student spoke about the crash at a news conference at Leon High School, calling on all students to "make smarter decisions."

Two laptops were set up in front of the high school after the conference to give students a chance to look at the site.



Ready to get your Learners Permit?

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LowestPriceTrafficSchool.com

Four Teens Killed in Fiery Crash

Five teen girls were killed in a when the SUV they were in crashed into an oncoming car and burst into flames. One passenger in the oncoming car was killed, and another passenger lost her unborn child. Police believe the SUV hydroplaned on a curve in wet, foggy conditions.

Source: Gainesville.com ♦

Lessons Learned

We drive in environmental conditions each time we make a trip. Understanding better how to handle changing conditions will make the trip more enjoyable and safer.

Fog, haze, smoke and mist can affect our visibility greatly. Never drive with only your parking lights on – use your low-beam headlights. Be alert for slow-moving or stopped traffic. Check your rearview mirrors frequently for vehicles that are approaching quickly from the rear.

Be especially careful for patches of fog in valleys and low-lying areas. If possible, drive slowly but keep moving. If conditions are too difficult, pull over as far to the right as possible, off the main travel portion of the roadway, and stop. Leave your parking lights on and activate your hazard lights.

Driving in the rain is a hazard we must consider. When the roads are wet, stopping distance is increased. When braking, friction between your tires and the surface of the roadway affects your stopping distance. Wet roads have less friction and increase the distance it takes you to stop.

Also, driving through water may cause hydroplaning. The tread on a tire prevents hydroplaning, which is one reason the law requires tire treads to meet certain standards. As little as 1/16 of one inch of water can cause hydroplaning.

Hydroplaning occurs when your tires ride on a thin layer of water and do not touch the road. When the car is riding on a film of water, there is no friction between your tires and the road. Hydroplaning also affects your ability to steer and brake.

Do not drive through large bodies of standing water, which can affect brake performance and the vehicle's electrical system and can cause engine failure, which could result in costly repairs.

If the standing water is concentrated on one portion of the road and only one side of the vehicle goes through the water, the vehicle will often pull in that direction.

The force of the pull is dependent on the depth of the water and the speed of the vehicle.

As you approach standing water, lift your foot off the gas pedal and check your rearview mirror for vehicles that are following you too closely.

Remember:

1. Slow down before driving through the water.
2. Turn your windshield wipers on.
3. Tap the brakes as you exit.

Use caution when checking the outside mirrors. Rain can distort or obliterate images.

NEVER drive through standing water if you do not know how deep it is.

Wind can also be a problem, especially when driving large vehicles, such as a truck or a motor home. Be alert for cross gusts when leaving overpasses, large buildings or other large areas where the wind was temporarily blocked from striking your vehicle.

Another ongoing problem with wind gusts occurs when you are being passed by large vehicles such as tractor trailers or buses traveling in either direction. Wind gusts from these vehicles can make your car more difficult to control. As these vehicles start to pass you, grip your steering wheel firmly. You may also want to reduce your speed.

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.

Want to pass your DMV Exam the first time?

Take the DMV Exam Prep Course at LowestPriceTrafficSchool.com



Teen Serves 15 Days in Jail for Pedestrian Death

An 18-year-old woman was convicted of reckless operation and failure to control in the death of a 39-year-old pedestrian. The pedestrian was pinned against the side of a building by the teen's car after the teen ran a stop sign.

Source: *Vindy.net* ♦

Lessons Learned

In 2005, 4,881 pedestrians were killed in traffic crashes in the United States - a decrease of 13 percent from the 5,584 pedestrians killed in 1995. On average, a pedestrian is killed in a traffic crash every 108 minutes.

There were 64,000 pedestrians injured in traffic crashes in 2005. On average, a pedestrian is injured in a traffic crash every eight minutes.

In 2005, almost one-fifth (18 percent) of all children between the ages of 5 and 9 years who were killed in traffic crashes were pedestrians. In addition, children under 15 years old accounted for eight percent of all pedestrian fatalities in motor vehicle crashes.

Older pedestrians (ages 70+) accounted for 16 percent of all pedestrian fatalities and five percent of all pedestrians injured in 2005. The death rate for this group, both males and females, was 2.88 per 100,000; this was higher than any other age group.

During 2005, 43 percent of the young pedestrian fatalities occurred between the hours of 3 PM and 7 PM, and 48 percent occurred on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday.

Of all the highway users, pedestrians are the most vulnerable. It is the special responsibility of drivers to watch for and protect pedestrians.

Many pedestrians who do not drive are not fully aware of traffic laws, including those that pertain to signals. Many do not know the distance needed to stop a moving vehicle. Children and the elderly are most at risk.

Children can act impulsively and may run into traffic without thinking. The elderly may take longer to cross the street. They may not be able to see or hear well and may be 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. Try to let them know you are there with a tap on your horn or a hand wave.

Many pedestrians assume that drivers will yield the right of way to anyone in the crosswalk. When they cross at an intersection with a Walk signal, pedestrians 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 and pay little attention to moving traffic.

Be alert for pedestrians at night, even in well-lit areas. It is often difficult to identify pedestrians at night.

Watch for pedestrians when leaving an alley or driveway. Always stop before crossing the sidewalk and look for pedestrians. You may tap your horn as a warning. Once across the sidewalk, be prepared to yield the right of way to other traffic on the street.

Although a jogger is safer using a sidewalk or jogging path, you may encounter joggers on the street. A jogger who is coming toward you should see you, but a jogger whose back is towards you may not hear you coming. Be aware of joggers who are wearing music headsets as their hearing ability will be compromised.

The primary traveling aids for a person who is blind are often a white cane and/or a trained guide dog. Independent travel involves some risk that can be greatly reduced when you, the driver, are aware of the use and meaning of a white cane or guide dog.

Drivers must always yield the right-of-way to persons who are blind. When a pedestrian is crossing a street guided by a dog or carrying a cane or walking stick that is white in color or white tipped with red in a raised or in an extended position, all vehicles must come to a complete stop.

Whenever a pedestrian who is mobility impaired (using a wheelchair, crutches, a cane or a walker) is in a crosswalk, it is the driver's responsibility to stop at the intersection to allow the pedestrian to cross safely. Once the pedestrian has crossed safely, the driver may proceed with caution.

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