

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Says Brake Failure Caused Five-Car Pile-Up

After a five-car chain-reaction crash, police say the 16-year-old girl in the fifth car told them that her brakes failed, causing her to hit the last car in a line of four stopped vehicles at 35 mph. The other cars in the line then crashed into one another. No serious injuries were reported.

Source: *CJOnline.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

When you are driving, things can happen very quickly.

If you experience brake failure, pump the brake pedal rapidly several times, unless your vehicle has anti-lock brakes. You may be able to work up enough pressure to stop the car. If this doesn't work, shift into the next lower gear. As the vehicle begins to slow down, shift again. To slow down further, apply the parking brake slowly. Make sure you are holding down the release

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lever or button. This will prevent your rear wheels from locking and your vehicle from skidding (the parking brake is a separate braking system and brakes only the two rear wheels). Rub your tires on the curb to slow your vehicle, or pull off the road into an open space.

Prevent brake failure with regular maintenance. Brakes are more likely to overheat if you frequently drive downhill or drive with your foot riding on the brake pedal. If you think your brakes are overheating, pull off the highway to a safe place to allow them to cool off.

Make sure there are no objects, such as a crumpled floor mat or drink can, that are keeping you from being able to press the brake pedal down.

Remember to release the parking brake if you are going to push or tow your vehicle.

Different vehicles have different braking systems. It is important to read about your braking system in your owner's manual so you will know how to use it most effectively in emergency situations.

If your vehicle breaks down, safely move the vehicle so that all four wheels are off the pavement and the disabled vehicle can be seen in both directions. Engage your parking brake and turn on your emergency flashers. Get all passengers out on the side away from traffic. Raise the hood and tie a white cloth to your left door handle or radio antenna.

A dead battery will prevent your vehicle from starting. Jump-starting can be dangerous if you do not have the proper equipment or knowledge to perform the task. A battery can explode if jumped improperly.

Teen Passenger Killed in Crash; Alcohol and Speed Were Factors

A 15-year-old teen was killed when she was partially ejected from the truck she was riding in with other teens. Police say alcohol and speed were factors in the crash.

Source: KVBC.com ♦

Lessons Learned

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.

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 also affects the reflex action of the eyes. At night, this impairment can be critical. As the headlights of oncoming vehicles come closer, the pupils of the eyes normally become smaller to shut out excess light. This reflex keeps the driver from being blinded by the glare of headlights. When the lights have passed, the pupils enlarge again to let in all available light.

But after only a few drinks, this reflex action is impaired. The pupils do not become small rapidly as bright lights approach, and they are slow to open after bright lights pass. As a result, the driver can be blinded temporarily after meeting each vehicle.



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Good Samaritan Pulls Teen Away From Burning Car

A neighborhood man pulled the 17-year-old driver of a burning car to safety after the teen managed to get out of the car. The teen had suffered a dislocated hip. The teen told authorities he felt tired and thinks he fell asleep at the wheel.

Source: *VenturaCountyStar.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conservatively estimates that 100,000 police-reported crashes are the direct result of driver fatigue each year. This results in an estimated 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses.

A typical crash related to sleepiness has the following characteristics:

- Occurs during late night/early morning or late afternoon
- Is a single-vehicle crash
- Occurs on a high-speed road
- Driver does not attempt to avoid the crash
- Driver is alone in the vehicle

There are many underlying causes of sleepiness, including:

- too little sleep
- interrupted or fragmented sleep
- chronic sleep debt
- use of sedating medications
- consumption of alcohol

These factors have cumulative effects and a combination of any of these can greatly increase one's risk for a fatigue-related crash. The only way to reduce sleepiness is to sleep.

Being fatigued while driving can cause:

- Impaired reaction time, judgment and vision
- Problems with information processing and short-term memory
- Decreased performance, vigilance and motivation
- Increased moodiness and aggressive behaviors

Before hitting the road:

- Get a good night's sleep. While this varies from individual to individual, sleep experts recommend between 7-9 hours of sleep per night.
- Avoid alcohol and medications (over-the-counter and prescribed) that may impair performance. Alcohol interacts with fatigue, increasing its effects.
- Consult your physician or a local sleep disorders center for diagnosis and treatment if you suffer frequent daytime sleepiness, have difficulty sleeping at night often, and/or snore loudly every night.

You are at risk of drowsy driving if you:

- Are sleep-deprived or fatigued (6 hours of sleep or less triples your risk)
- Are suffering from sleep loss (insomnia), poor quality sleep, or a sleep debt
- Drive long distances without proper rest breaks
- Drive through the night, in mid-afternoon, or when you would normally be asleep
- Drive alone or on a long, rural, dark or boring road

Signs that tell you to stop and rest:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, or heavy eyelids
- Daydreaming; wandering/disconnected thoughts
- Trouble remembering the last few miles driven; missing exits or traffic signs
- Yawning repeatedly or rubbing your eyes
- Trouble keeping your head up
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, or hitting a shoulder rumble strip

Remember – the only cure for sleepiness is sleep.



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.

Nearly Half of Teens Admit to Texting While Driving

While recent studies indicate that teens agree that texting while driving is dangerously distracting, a significant number still continue to do so.

In a 2007 study by SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and Liberty Mutual Insurance Group, 37% of teens rated text messaging as “extremely” or “very” distracting. A statewide study by AAA Colorado showed teens feel even more strongly about the risk:

- 97% think text messaging while driving is dangerous.
- 91% think there should be legal limits on cell phone use, including text messaging, while driving (these laws do exist in many states; some target only teens, while others extend to all drivers).
- 74% admitted not knowing the law regarding cell phone use and driving in Colorado (meaning education and enforcement should be a priority).
- 73% said strict penalties, such as losing their licenses, would make them less likely to text while driving.

But in a separate AAA study, 46% of teens admitted to texting while driving. And in the Colorado study, the numbers were even higher – 51% confessed to it, and 38% admitted taking their eyes off the road while text messaging.

Many states have or are considering laws prohibiting teens from texting while driving. California’s law went into effect on July 1. California Highway Patrol spokesman Tom Marshall said that officers have to spot another offense before stopping teen drivers who are text-messaging because the law classifies texting and driving by teens as a secondary offense.

After the Colorado survey, state troopers planned to increase education efforts and continue cracking down on drivers who break the existing law, which makes it illegal for teens with an instruction permit to use a cell phone, whether talking or texting, while driving.

To educate yourself about the risk, think about how texting and other distractions would affect your driving as you ride as a passenger. Would you have missed that traffic light? Rear-ended a stopped school bus? Veered over the center line? Here are some additional tips:

- Turn off your cell phone while driving. Let voicemail capture your voice and text messages.
- Pull off the road safely and stop if you need to send a text.
- Recognize that wanting to be available at all times can be a habit that will negatively affect your driving at best and could cause a terrible crash at worse. Let friends and family know that you won’t be responding to text messages while driving.
- If you just can’t resist texting and driving, put your phone somewhere you can’t reach it, like the trunk of your car.

Source: LowestPriceTrafficSchool.com ♦

Lessons Learned

Texting is only one activity that can distract a driver from the road. Paying attention to your driving requires discipline, but your life and the lives of others depend on it. Watch out for these other distracting behaviors too:

- Cellular phones: About 30% of all drivers use a cell phone while driving to make outgoing or incoming calls on at least some of their driving trips. And going hand-free is not enough – it’s the conversation itself that is so distracting, not just holding the phone to your ear.
- 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.
- Grooming: 8% engage in personal grooming (such as putting on make-up, shaving, or looking in the mirror).
- Reading: 12% look at maps or directions, and 4% read printed material (such as a book, newspaper, or mail).