

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Riding with another Teen Knocked Out in Crash

A 17-year-old boy was knocked unconscious when he suffered a head injury while riding with another teen. The car he was riding in was struck broadside by a van when the 18-year-old driver of the car turned left into a shopping center.

Source: *RecordOnline.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

No matter how skilled a driver any teen is, s/he is still at risk when riding in a vehicle driven by another teen. And it's common for teens to pack a vehicle full of friends who are unlicensed or who don't have access to a vehicle or to save money on gas. Unfortunately, they also do this because it's fun to listen to music, laugh and talk - huge distractions for an inexperienced driver. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, crash risk for teenage drivers

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increases incrementally with one, two or three or more passengers. With three or more passengers, fatal crash risk is about three times higher than when a beginner is driving alone. About two-thirds of all crash deaths of teens that involve 16-year-old drivers occur when the beginners were driving with teen passengers.

Studies indicate that passenger restrictions can reduce this problem. Passenger restrictions for teen drivers already exist in many states as components of graduated licensing programs. For parents, knowing and enforcing these passenger restrictions means reducing their child's risk of injury or death in a traffic crash.

While this sounds easy enough, many parents are unfamiliar with the graduated driver licensing laws in their state. And even those who are familiar may neglect to enforce the restriction. A 2000 survey by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that 84 percent of parents of young drivers favored restricting teenage passengers during the first six months of licensure. But some studies indicate that parents leave enforcement of most graduated licensing restrictions to law enforcement – a mistake, since law enforcement does not have the ability to monitor the behavior of an individual teen the way parents do.

To help ensure the safety of your teen, learn the graduated driver's licensing laws in your state, and make enforcement of them part of your house rules.

Make sure your home driver education program is complete by using a [log](#) to keep track of your teen's progress.

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Teen Dies in Rollover Crash

A 16-year-old girl died in a crash less than one mile from her high school campus. The teen lost control of her truck and it rolled over on a state highway.

Source: *MSNBC.msn.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Trucks have a higher center of gravity than cars, making them a risky vehicle choice for inexperienced drivers. Vehicles with a high center of gravity are more prone to rollover. They also can be more difficult to handle in an emergency, making rollover even more likely.

The risk of rollover increases significantly at speeds over 50 miles per hour and on curved roads. Wearing seat belts dramatically increases the chances of survival during a rollover crash.

When driving a truck or an SUV, use caution on both interstates and rural roads to avoid running off the road. If your vehicle's wheels drift off the roadway, gradually slow down and steer back onto the road when safe to do so.

The first years of driving are very risky, no matter what your teen is driving. In fact, teen drivers have the highest death rates in car crashes of any age group. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death among Americans aged 15-20.

"Vehicle choice does matter," says J. Peter Kissinger, president and CEO of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

First, consider size. A mid- or larger-size car could mean the difference between life and death in a crash. Though that's true for drivers and passengers of all ages, it's especially true for teens because of the high likelihood of driver error, which often leads to a crash.

"Don't buy the argument that you need something highly maneuverable and small," says Kissinger. "You simply don't have the skills to do that when you're a teenager."

According to State Farm Insurance, more than one-third of teens drive subcompact or compact cars. Drivers age 20 or older are only half as likely to be in these super-small cars. But "you want a car that isn't so small they're going to automatically lose if they get into a crash, especially if they hit a larger vehicle," says Kissinger.

Former National Highway Traffic Safety Administration chief Jeffrey Runge, a former emergency room physician, recommends vehicles weighing at least 3,300 pounds for teen drivers. This is a good guideline for parents who are

unsure of which vehicle class to shop in for their teen's car.

Many parents think an ancient clunker shaped like a tank would be safest for their teens. But experts demur, for two main reasons. First, the poor acceleration power of an older vehicle both makes it more difficult for teens to accelerate in some driving situations, such as lane changes and highway merges, and tempts them to simply drive faster to make up the difference in accelerating power. Second, older vehicles don't have the benefit of modern safety features, such as airbags and electronic stability control.

"If parents can afford a new vehicle, they should get one because newer vehicles tend to be safer in terms of crashworthiness and they're more likely to have important safety equipment such as side airbags," said Anne McCartt, senior vice president for research at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Research electronic stability control; this feature helps drivers maintain control of their vehicles during extreme steering maneuvers. Since teens are prone to overcorrecting in an emergency, it may be well worth it. The feature "cuts single vehicle crashes by more than half in our studies," says Susan Ferguson, senior vice president of research for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Ready to get your Learners Permit?



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Teen to be Arraigned for Vehicular Homicide

A 19-year-old man is facing charges that he was drunk when he crashes his car into two pedestrians. One of the victims died and the other had to be put into a medically-induced coma. The teen will be arraigned on a charge of vehicular homicide while driving under the influence.

Source: *STLToday.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Teens are at far greater risk of death in an alcohol-related crash than the overall population, despite the fact they cannot legally purchase or publicly possess alcohol in any state. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

Did you know?

-During 2006, 7,643 15- to 20-year-old drivers and motorcycle operators were involved in fatal traffic crashes across the nation, 1,377 (18 percent) of whom had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher.

-Nationally, 64 percent of all drivers or motorcycle operators ages 15 to 20 who were involved in fatal traffic crashes and had a BAC of .08 or higher died as a result of the crash.

-Violators of underage drinking laws often face a trip to jail, the loss of their driver's license, and dozens of other unanticipated expenses including attorney fees, court costs, and other fines. Plus, there is the added embarrassment, humiliation, and potential loss and consequence related to academic eligibility, college acceptance, scholarship awards, and more.

-Most of those killed in alcohol-related crashes involving teen drivers are the young drivers themselves and their passengers.

All states now enforce a minimum drinking age of 21. Nevertheless, alcohol related crashes are still a top safety problem.

Make sure you understand:

-Alcohol is not actually digested; it's processed. It's absorbed directly through the lining of the stomach into the bloodstream. This is why the body feels the effect so quickly.

-Alcohol has its first and 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.

-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.

-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.

-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.

-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.

-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.

Teens and their parents should have an agreement that the teen can always call a parent for a ride, whether the teen is intoxicated or is faced with the prospect of riding with a driver who has been drinking. Make a pact in which the parent promises to pick up the teen without questions or lectures. You can have a discussion about the issue the following day, when everyone is calmer and safe at home.

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Teen Drivers on Motorcycles, Mopeds and Scooters

For several reasons, many teen drivers today are turning to motorcycles, mopeds and scooters for transportation. These vehicles cost little to nothing (in the case of electric scooters) for gas, are easy to maneuver and park, and in some states, mopeds and scooters can be legally operated at a younger age than required for passenger vehicles and/or can be legally operated without a [driver's license](#). But the benefits of these vehicles are offset by the compromise in safety.

Motorcycles, mopeds and scooters are less visible in traffic, and their riders are much more vulnerable to injury in a crash. Riders of these vehicles must take this into account. Here are some safety tips for riders:

- -Make training a priority. Even if a license is not required, for safety's sake, practice extensively in a variety of road and weather conditions. Learn how to minimize wobbling when accelerating and how to avoid locking the wheels when braking. Ask a seasoned rider for help. If a license is required, make sure to get one – about one-quarter of fatally injured motorcycle riders don't have a valid license.
- Choose the roads you use carefully. Try not to select those with heavy, fast-moving traffic. Mopeds and scooters are not allowed on some roads.
- Watch for vehicles following you too closely. You have the ability of stopping much more quickly than cars. If you stop quickly in front of a vehicle that is following too closely, you could be run over. Drivers may tailgate a moped or scooter because these vehicles often travel at lower speeds than cars. Use a hand or electric signal well ahead of a stop or turn to give drivers behind you time to slow down.
- All of these vehicles are less stable and less visible than cars, but [motorcycles](#) combine this with high-performance capabilities. Don't overuse the power of the motorcycle and cause a crash. Per mile traveled, the number of deaths on motorcycles is about 26 times the number in cars.
- Weather and road conditions present greater difficulties for you than to the driver of a passenger vehicle. A puddle may hide a hole that jolts a car; the same hidden hole can throw your vehicle out of control. When it rains, reduced traction may make it difficult for you to see and balance and reduce your control of the vehicle. A wind gust could move your

vehicle across an entire lane. Gravel roads decrease traction and may cause you to slow down or brake where a car or not. Anticipate these changes whenever possible and begin slowing down early so vehicles behind you will have time to react. Use extra care when crossing railroad tracks. The tires of your vehicle could get caught in the grooves of the crossing, causing you to lose your balance.

- Never carry a passenger unless it is legal and you are comfortable doing so. Passengers change the way you operate your vehicle. If you are inexperienced in transporting a passenger, you may have extra difficulties with balance and control of your vehicle.
- Whether it's required by law or not, always wear a helmet. Helmets are about 37 percent effective in preventing rider deaths and about 67 percent effective in preventing brain injuries. A rider who isn't wearing a helmet is 40 percent more likely to suffer a fatal head injury compared with a helmeted rider.

Tips for sharing the road with two-wheeled vehicles:

- Motorcyclists must coordinate the hand throttle, hand clutch and foot gearshift lever to accelerate smoothly. If this action is not performed smoothly, a balance problem may occur. The problem is magnified when a vehicle is following too closely.
- When a motorcyclist is following you, be especially careful not to make any sudden stops.
- Include motorcycles in your visual search pattern. Watch for motorcycles before turning and be sure to yield the right-of-way.
- Do not share the lane with a motorcycle. The motorcyclist needs the room to maneuver safely and is entitled to the entire lane.
- When a motorcycle is passing your vehicle, maintain your lane position and speed. Allow the motorcyclist to complete the maneuver and assume proper lane position as quickly as possible.

Source: *LowestPriceTrafficSchool.com* ♦