

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Seniors Killed in Drag-Racing Crash

Two high-school seniors were killed in a high-speed crash that the coroner says occurred when the teens were drag-racing with another car. The car split in half. Neither teen was wearing a seat belt.

Source: Post-Trib.com ♦

Lessons Learned

Exceeding the posted limit or driving too fast for conditions is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. Speed is a factor in nearly one-third of all fatal crashes. Speed-related crashes cost society more than \$23 billion a year.

Too few drivers view speeding as an immediate risk to their personal safety or the safety of others. Yet, speeding reduces a driver's ability to steer safely around curves or objects in the roadway, and it extends the distance required to stop a vehicle in emergency

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situations.

Crash severity increases with the speed of the vehicle at impact. Inversely, the effectiveness of restraint devices like air bags and safety belts, and vehicular construction features such as crumple zones and side member beams decline as impact speed increases.

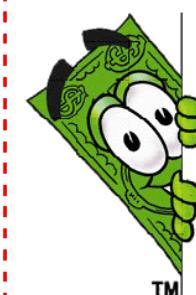
The probability of death, disfigurement, or debilitating injury grows with higher speed at impact. Such consequences double for every 10 mph over 50 mph that a vehicle travels.

Some common characteristics of aggressive drivers include:

- They are high-risk drivers, more likely to drink and drive, speed, or drive unbelted.
- Their vehicle provides anonymity, allowing them to take out their frustrations on other drivers.
- Their frustration levels are high, concern for other motorists, low.
- They consider vehicles as objects and fail to consider the human element involved; therefore, they seldom consider the consequences of their actions.
- They run stop signs, disobey red lights, speed, tailgate, weave in and out of traffic, pass on the right, make unsafe lane changes, flash their lights, blow their horns, or make hand and facial gestures.

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Teen Survives Car-Train Crash

A 17-year-old boy suffered minor injuries after being struck by a cargo train when he failed to look both ways at a railroad crossing. The front of the teen's car was destroyed, but the teen suffered only cuts to his hands and was able to walk away from the crash.

Source: *MiddletownJournal.com*♦

Lessons Learned

There are several signs, signals and pavement markings that indicate highway-railroad crossings. When you see one of them, slow down and be ready to stop.

Railroad crossings are a type of intersection. Like highway intersections, they can be very dangerous. But a collision between a passenger vehicle and a train will almost always leave the occupants of the passenger vehicle in a much worse condition than those of the train.

There are two types of railroad crossings: controlled and uncontrolled.

Controlled crossings usually have both red lights and crossing gates. You must make a complete stop when the lights are flashing and/or the gates are down. Remain stopped until the lights stop flashing and the gates are raised.

An uncontrolled crossing is one that does not have red lights or a crossing gate. However, like a controlled crossing, an uncontrolled crossing is marked with a round yellow advance warning sign placed ahead of the crossing.

The advance warning sign tells you to slow down, look and listen for a train. Be prepared to stop at the tracks in the event that a train is approaching.

A crossbuck sign marks the railroad crossing.

Some of the more dangerous crossings have a stop sign. If this is the case, the same laws apply as at a highway intersection.

When you approach any railroad crossing:

- Slow down and check traffic behind you. Be aware of other vehicles approaching you at an unsafe speed.
- Reduce the noise level in your vehicle by turning your radio down or off. If necessary, lower your window.
- Listen for train sounds. If you hear a train, stop. The sound of a train whistle is carried in the opposite direction from the direction of the traveling train. Even if the sound of the whistle is faint, the train may be very close to you.

- Stop at a safe distance before the railroad tracks if a train is approaching.

When the train has passed, make sure the intersection is clear and that another train is not approaching on another track before you attempt to cross. A sign below the crossbuck will indicate how many sets of tracks you will be passing.

When crossing the railroad tracks, reduce your speed to handle a potential rough ride, but do not linger on the tracks.

Check both ways on the tracks. Make sure any vehicles ahead of you have cleared the tracks before you start to cross.

Drive onto the tracks only when you have enough space to clear the tracks. Never stop on the railroad tracks to wait for traffic ahead to move.

Be prepared to stop behind buses or trucks that are hauling flammable contents. The law requires such vehicles to stop at all railroad crossings.

Remember: Trains cannot stop quickly. An average freight train traveling at 30 mph needs a stopping distance of more than half a mile. Longer trains moving at faster speeds can take one and half miles or more to stop.

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One Teen Killed After Catching Ride with Drunk Driver

An 18-year-old woman was killed in a rollover crash in a car driven by a 17-year-old who was arrested on suspicion of felony drunk driving after the crash. The woman, who was not wearing her seat belt, was ejected from the vehicle.

Source: Petaluma360.com♦

Lessons Learned

No matter how skilled a driver you are, you are still at risk when riding in a vehicle driven by another teen. Riding with other teens is a high-risk activity that you may even participate in before earning your own driver's license. 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 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. Knowing and abiding by these passenger restrictions means reducing your risk of injury or death in a traffic crash.

When you do ride with another teen, avoid being a distraction. Encourage the driver to keep the volume on the stereo low so you and any other passengers don't have to shout to be heard. Minimize the driver's involvement in conversation and avoid heated or loud discussions. Everyone in the vehicle should wear a seat belt. Avoid wild dancing or sudden movements that may distract the driver. And never, ever interfere with the driver by grabbing the wheel, even as a joke.

Pay attention to your friend's driving so you can help make adjustments if necessary. If s/he is speeding, weaving in and out of traffic, or seems to be having trouble controlling the vehicle, mention it.

Ask other passengers to quiet down so the driver can concentrate on driving. You can always pick the conversation back up once you arrive safely at your destination.

It is important to remember how each one of us can be a positive or negative force in someone else's life. Being a role model and influencing your friends to make the right choices carries a big responsibility. You can have an impact.

How Do I Stop Someone From Driving Impaired?

1. Try reasoning with the person - Tell them about the consequences of driving impaired.
2. Make other arrangements - See if a sober friend or taxi (prepaid, if possible) will take the person to their destination. If it's a friend of yours, you have the option of driving them to your home and letting them drive home the next day when the alcohol is out of his system.
3. Stand firm - Don't let yourself be swayed by the impaired person's belief that they can drive. Don't tell yourself that letting this person drive "just this once" won't matter. Remind yourself that it only takes one time for a collision to happen.
4. Take the keys away - If that is not possible given the circumstances, call the police. Remember, you are doing the right thing as a friend.
5. Give yourself credit - You've handled a very uncomfortable situation, and you've kept this person and everyone in their path safe.

Fast Facts about Alcohol

- Drinking coffee, taking a shower, or breathing cold air will not sober you up faster. The only thing that works is time.
- Mixing alcohol and other drugs, even over-the-counter medicines, can make you sick or even kill you, or may cause you to hurt others.
- Over 38% of all drowning deaths are alcohol-related.
- One beer, one shot of whiskey, and one glass of wine all have the same amount of alcohol.

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What to Do If You Have a Breakdown

Vehicle breakdowns are stressful and can even be frightening, depending on the circumstances. If your vehicle won't start in a parking lot, you have the advantage of being stopped in a safe place, but if the breakdown occurs while you are driving, you must take immediate action to ensure the safety of you and your passengers.

First, don't panic. Panicking may cause you to make the situation even more dangerous. Stay calm and follow a logical progression to get your vehicle safely off the highway.

Your first action should be to slow down. You should also look for a safe place to pull over, but you must have slowed your vehicle sufficiently to use the space you locate. Remember that if you pull off the pavement, your vehicle will lose traction; if you haven't slowed down enough, your vehicle could skid.

Once you have located a safe place to pull off the road, try to park where the disabled vehicle can be seen for at least 200 feet in each direction. Avoid pulling off in a curve or near a hill. Move the vehicle so all four wheels are off the pavement or traveled portion of the roadway.

In addition to making your vehicle visible, you must make it obvious that the vehicle is stopped. This is particularly important:

- at night or in bad weather such as rain or fog, when drivers may be using the lights of other vehicles to guide them
- considering drivers who may be sleepy or even under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- on the highway, where drivers may be suffering from "highway hypnosis," a condition that sometimes occurs for people on a long trip

Turn on your emergency flashers, tie a white cloth to the left door handle or antenna, and raise the hood to indicate that your vehicle is stopped and disabled.

Be careful when exiting the vehicle. When the way is clear, exit carefully but quickly and close the driver-side door behind you. Walk to the passenger side of your vehicle. Passengers should exit the vehicle on the side away from traffic.

Source: LowestPriceTrafficSchool.com♦

Sharing the Road with Motorcycles

Motorcycles are less stable and less visible than cars, and they have high performance capabilities. For these and other reasons, motorcycles are more likely than cars to be in crashes. And when motorcycles crash, their riders lack the protection of an enclosed vehicle, so they're more likely to be injured or killed. Per mile traveled, the number of deaths on motorcycles is about 26 times the number in cars. A rider who isn't wearing a helmet is 40 percent more likely to suffer a fatal head injury, compared with a helmeted rider.

The actions of motorcyclists can affect motor vehicle operators in numerous ways. When you follow a motorcycle, remember that motorcycles have the ability of stopping much more quickly than other vehicles in emergencies. Following too closely endangers your life and that of the motorcyclist.

In addition to maintaining a safe following distance from motorcyclists in front of you, check your rearview mirror and be aware of motorcyclists following you. When a motorcyclist is following you, be especially careful not to make any sudden stops.

Weather and road conditions present greater problems to the motorcyclist than to the driver of a motor vehicle. A puddle may hide a hole that jolts your car; the same hidden hole can throw a motorcycle out of control. When it rains, reduced traction makes it difficult for a motorcyclist to balance. It is more difficult for the motorcyclist to stay in control on slippery roads. Wet or icy roads impair a motorcyclist's ability to brake and maneuver. Wind gusts can move a motorcycle across an entire lane. Gravel roads decrease traction and may cause a rider to slow down or brake where a car would not. Allow extra space for motorcycles in all adverse conditions. Use extra care when you are following a motorcyclist that is crossing railroad tracks. Railroad tracks present a special problem for motorcyclists, because motorcycle tires can get caught in the grooves of the crossing, causing the rider to lose her or his balance.

When you are following a motorcycle that is carrying a passenger, use extra caution. Passengers change the way the motorcyclist should operate. A motorcyclist who is inexperienced in transporting a passenger may have extra difficulties with balancing and controlling the motorcycle.

Source: LowestPriceTrafficSchool.com♦