

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Teen Charged with Death by Auto

Police say a 19-year-old man was drunk when he crashed his car into a support wall under a freight train bridge, killing his 19-year-old passenger. The teen has been charged with death by auto.

Source: *NJ.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Underage drinking, particularly amongst college students, is a serious problem that calls for a serious solution. But according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), that solution should not jeopardize the 21 Minimum Legal Drinking Age, which has saved over 26,000 lives since becoming the law.

Some young people feel that it's unfair that an 18 year-old can vote, sign a contract, serve on a jury and be subject to the draft, but is not allowed to drink.

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for Teens and their Parents



The 21 drinking age law is not based on the basis of creating a legal majority but rather on the problem that a lower drinking age created in the 1970s. The minimum drinking age of 21 is based on a variety of factors – motor vehicle fatalities, physical development, including brain function and additional health factors. Evidence proves that the 21 minimum drinking age law is effective, having saved over 900 lives a year since its inception. The fact is that underage drinking is related to numerous health problems including injuries and death resulting from alcohol poisoning, car crashes, suicide, homicide, assaults, drowning and recreational mishaps.

Some people believe that in Europe, people drink from an early age, yet do not have the alcohol-related problems we do. But the claim that the relaxed European attitudes toward alcohol consumption creates a culture where youth don't engage in binge drinking and that it leads directly to more responsible drinking is an urban myth and has no basis in fact or reality.

According to 2003 data from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs revealed that of 35 European countries, 31 had a greater percentage of 15-year olds who had been intoxicated in the past year than in the U.S.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has estimated that since the 21 Minimum Legal Drinking Age was enacted in 1984, approximately 900 lives a year have been saved in traffic fatalities alone.

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## Unlicensed Teen Hits Middle School Student

A 16-year-old boy who struck and injured a 12-year-old girl as she walked to school was cited for driving without a license and driving too fast for conditions. The teen's father was also ticketed for allowing his son to drive without a license.

Source: *IslandPacket.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

According to the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), most states, including Pennsylvania, have a graduated driver licensing program that is responsible for the permit and license process for young drivers. Statistics from federal agencies and insurance industries show teen drivers have the highest crash risk of any age group.

Although state laws differ, the GHSA says that traffic safety experts advise that graduated licensing programs feature the following characteristics:

1. Learners permits not issued than before age 16, with the learner stage lasting no less than six months.
2. During the learner stage, parents certify at least 30-50 hours of supervised driving practice.
3. The intermediate stage lasts until at least age 18 and includes:
  - A nighttime driving restriction.
  - A passenger restriction (no teenage passengers or no more than one teenage passenger).
  - Restricted cell phone usage.

Enforcing GDL laws as house rules is an excellent tool for parents, who have the support of an existing law, the need for which and the efficacy of which is fully supported by research. Enforcement of the law by the police gives parents additional support from an outside source when enforcing the law in their own households.

The first step in implementing your state's GDL law is to become familiar with it. The law is typically detailed in the first or second chapter of the driver handbook. Many states post their driver handbooks online. You can also find information on GDL laws at your state's

Department of Motor Vehicles or Department of Public Safety website. Once you locate the information, save or bookmark it for future reference.

The next step is to help your teen understand the importance of following GDL laws. Ask your teen to tell you why she or he thinks GDL laws exist. Make sure your teen understands that GDL laws exist not only to protect teens from themselves, but to protect them from other teens. Your teen needs to follow GDL laws whether she or he is the driver or a passenger. Remind your teen that GDL laws become less stringent as the teen demonstrates responsible driving behavior – it's not just about having another birthday.

Next, incorporate your state's GDL laws into your house rules. For example, newly licensed drivers are typically restricted from driving during certain hours. You can ensure that your teen obeys the law by integrating these time limits into your teen's curfew.

Finally, establish penalties for violating the GDL law or receiving a traffic ticket, whether the violation is for disobeying the GDL law or another offense. Be clear about the penalties from the beginning and relate them to driving by withdrawing driving privileges or enforcing new limits on driving. Help your teen understand all the ramifications of receiving a ticket, such as points on the license, fines, insurance increases, and failure to achieve the next stage in the GDL process.

Enforcing the GDL law in your household is a valuable tool that will help ensure your teen's safety behind the wheel.

**Ready to get your Learners Permit?**



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# Teen Killed, Passenger Hurt in Car Crash

An 18-year-old man died and his female passenger was seriously injured in a car crash; police say speed and alcohol may have been factors. The driver lost control of his truck, which flipped several times; both the driver and passenger were thrown from the vehicle.

Source: [HonoluluAdvisor.com](http://HonoluluAdvisor.com) ♦

## Lessons Learned

The most common traffic violation is speeding. Many drivers speed because they think they will save time and arrive at their destination faster than they would if they didn't speed.

How much time do you think you save by speeding? This chart illustrates the time saved over a 10 mile trip on the highway.

| M.P.H | ACTUAL TIME    | TIME SAVED     |
|-------|----------------|----------------|
| 55    | 10 MIN. 55 SEC |                |
| 60    | 10 MIN. 00 SEC | 55 SEC.        |
| 65    | 09 MIN. 4 SEC. | 1 MIN. 41 SEC. |
| 70    | 08 MIN 34 SEC. | 2 MIN. 21 SEC. |

The Basic Speed Rule says, "Do not go faster than is safe for conditions." This is the safest way to drive. What does it mean? When you're driving on a road with a posted limit of 40 mph, that's the safest maximum speed you're allowed to drive during normal road conditions. If it begins to rain, it may not be safe to drive 40 mph, because the road may be slippery from the mixture of oil, dust and dirt accumulation with the rainwater. Conditions dictate the speed that you should drive, regardless of what the speed limit may be.

Many drivers believe the worst that can happen to them is to receive a speeding ticket, but these drivers are wrong. Driving too fast for conditions or exceeding the posted speed limit can kill you.

In every vehicle crash, there are actually three collisions:

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

### The Vehicle's Collision

When a vehicle crashes into another vehicle or a solid, immovable object, it crushes, absorbing some of the force of the collision.

### The Human Collision

The second collision is the human collision. At the moment of impact, the driver and passengers in the vehicle are still traveling at the vehicle's original speed. When the vehicle comes to a complete stop, the occupants continue to be hurled forward until they come in contact with some part of the vehicle, such as the steering wheel, dashboard, front window, or back of the front seat. Occupants in a crash can also cause serious injuries to other occupants when they collide with each other. Rear-seat passengers often hit people in the front seat of the vehicle as they fly forward. For this reason, you should insist that all passengers in your vehicle wear their safety belts.

### The Human Body's Collision

In a crash, the internal organs are still moving even after a human body comes to a complete stop. The internal organs can slam into other organs of the skeletal system. This internal collision is often the cause of serious injury or death. For example, a person's head might collide with the windshield of the car during the second collision. The still-moving brain then collides with the inside of the skull, causing swelling and/or bleeding. This is the third collision. As total mass and speed of the vehicle(s) involved in a motor vehicle crash increase, there is a proportionate increase in the opportunity for injury to the human body, both externally and internally.

### How to Prevent Serious Injuries in a Crash

Wear your safety belt, including the shoulder harness properly. In a crash, you are far more likely to be killed if you are not wearing a safety belt. Wearing shoulder belts and lap belts make your chances of living through a crash twice as good. If you are involved in a crash, your seat belt will keep you from being thrown from your vehicle. If you are thrown from your vehicle in the crash, your risk of death is five times greater.



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## Spring Break Safety: Dealing with Roadside Distractions

Spring break is an exciting annual event for many young people. They look forward to taking time off from the rigors of schoolwork to spend time with friends having fun in an exotic setting.

But this can also be a dangerous time for young people, especially when they drive to their destination, often accompanied by distractions such as passengers and loud music. Driving requires attention and awareness, along with the ability to make complex decisions and act on them quickly.

For someone driving in an unfamiliar setting, this awareness is particularly important. Drivers in an unfamiliar setting can get distracted by:

- perplexing roads, signs, and signals
- getting lost or confused
- looking at maps or driving directions
- looking at the scenery

In this article, we will address the issue of how to handle roadside distractions when driving in an unfamiliar setting.

“Roadside distractions” refers to any aspect of the environment that draws a motorist’s attention away from the task of driving. For example, a driver who is spending spring break in a beach town may face roadside distractions such as:

- Heavy pedestrian traffic with pedestrians who may:
  - Dart in and out of traffic
  - Be over-excited or intoxicated
  - Be skimpily dressed
  - Include large groups of children
  - Be carrying several items, such as beach towels and toys
- Other drivers who:
  - exceed the low speed limit
  - run red lights and stop signs
  - weave in and out of traffic
  - play loud music
  - call out from their vehicles
- Other road users who are riding motorcycles, mopeds, bicycles and skateboards
- Narrow roadways, closed roads, and detours

- Noise and bright lights from nearby hotels, restaurants, bars and amusement parks

Drivers who are faced with this bewildering array of lights, sound and movement must continually refocus their attention on their driving. This is particularly important for inexperienced drivers whose control of the vehicle may be somewhat tenuous; a crash could occur very quickly.

The following tips will help:

- Minimize distractions inside the vehicle:
  - Turn the stereo off
  - Ask passengers to quiet down
  - Don’t eat, drink or smoke
  - Turn your cell phone off
  - Ask a passenger to act as a navigator instead of looking at the map or directions yourself
- Avoid stopping or turning suddenly:
  - Drive at or below the posted speed limit
  - Maintain an adequate following distance
  - Use your turn signal
  - Keep driving normally and turn around in a safe place if you miss your turn
- Scan the road ahead and your mirrors for trouble:
  - Watch the road ahead while taking quick glances further ahead and in your mirrors
  - Don’t let yourself be distracted from scanning - while you’re staring at one thing, another hazard could develop outside of your range of vision
- Ask yourself “What if...?”
  - What if that pedestrian steps into the street?
  - What if that bicyclist falls?
  - What if that traffic light changes suddenly?
  - What if that weaving driver is drunk?
- Avoid careless, reckless, aggressive drivers and drivers who may be intoxicated:
  - Keep a safe distance from these vehicles
  - Avoid challenging these drivers with your vehicle, eye contact, or gestures

Remember, driving safely helps ensure a safe, relaxing spring break!