

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Teen Killed in Crash on Flooded Road

An 18-year-old man was killed in a rollover crash after driving over a flooded road after heavy rainfall. The man was not wearing a safety belt.

Source: *EchoPress.net* ♦

## Tips for Teens: Managing Speed

A 2009 analysis of speeding-related crashes by the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA) shows that following the speed limit is not enough to prevent a crash when conditions warrant a reduction in speed. The study showed that in speeding-related crashes that caused one or more injuries, 26% of the crashes were contributed to be exceeding the posted speed limit, while 74% were due to driving too fast for conditions. In property-damage-only crashes where speed was a contributing factor, 18% of the crashes were due to exceeding the posted speed limit

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and 82% of the crashes were contributed to by driving too fast for conditions.

Drivers should reduce their speed: **-immediately when it begins to rain and when driving through standing water.** Roads become very slippery just after the rain begins, because the rainwater mixes with oil on the road that has been dropped from passing vehicles. Driving too fast on wet roads can result in skidding, when the vehicle loses traction with the road and the driver loses control of the vehicle. Never drive through standing water if you do not know how deep it is.

**-in foggy or smoky conditions.** Fog and smoke make it difficult to see ahead, and reducing speed reduces stopping distance.

**-before a curve.** Too often, drivers realize that they are moving too fast when they are already in the curve, but lowering speed in a curve results in a loss of traction that could cause a skid. Always reduce speed before entering the curve.

**-in construction zones.** Lower speed limits are usually posted in construction zones, but the new speed limit may not be low enough, especially for new drivers. The distraction of all the activity in the work zone and changes in the road surface can cause more difficulties for drivers who are inexperienced.

**-around school zones and playgrounds.** Children are often present when the lowered speed limits are not in effect. Children are unpredictable and may walk, skate or bike into the road without checking for traffic.

**-at night.** Visibility is reduced at night; street lights and the vehicle's headlights cannot entirely make up for this.

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## Teen Dies from Injuries Sustained in Crash

A 15-year-old boy has died from injuries sustained in a crash when the car in which he was a passenger veered into the path of a pickup truck; the teen suffered complications after heart surgery. The 18-year-old driver died in the crash.

Source: *TheTimesHerald.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

Most drivers are familiar with the concept of careless driving tickets, but few stop to think about what careless driving really is or how it causes crashes. Careless driving is an umbrella term for a number of violations, including lane drifting, which can lead to head-on or sideswipe crashes. About 10,000 deaths occur annually when vehicles leave the roadway.

According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA), drifting is defined as “when a vehicle is moving in a generally straight line, but at a slight angle to the lane. The driver might correct his or her course as the vehicle approaches a lane line or other boundary, or fail to correct until after a boundary has been crossed. In extreme cases, the driver fails to correct in time to avoid a collision.” Whether the collision that occurs is head-on or sideswipe depends on the position of the vehicles and the orientation of the road, among other factors.

Lane drifting occurs due to driver error. Specific causes of lane drifting include:

- [Driving under the influence](#) of drugs or alcohol
- [Drowsiness](#) or falling asleep
- Speeding, especially around a curve
- Lack of alertness, including daydreaming, reaching for something in the vehicle, or looking at something outside of the vehicle

For drivers, remaining sober and alert and maintaining a speed appropriate for conditions help prevent lane drifting. Roadway engineering and in-vehicle technology offer support to drivers who do drift and increased protection for all road users.

NHTSA says that about 90% of all rural crashes with fatalities occur on two-lane roads. Two-lane roads in rural areas usually do not have medians to separate two-way traffic; with vehicles in opposing directions traveling in such close proximity to one another, the margin of error is small and the potential for tragedy is enormous. According to the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety](#) (IIHS), sideswipe or head-on crashes that occur when vehicles cross the centerline comprise

approximately 20% of fatal crashes on rural two-lane roads and cause approximately 4,500 deaths every year. Many drivers are familiar with rumble strips along the right side of long stretches of highway; the rumble is both felt and heard when the vehicle’s tires drift onto the shoulder of the road. The IIHS advocates the addition of rumble strips along the centerlines of undivided rural two-lane roads.

In a report released on July 1, NHTSA said will determine whether or not lane-departure warning systems will be required on new vehicles beginning in 2011. Lane-departure warning systems alert drivers when their vehicle is leaving the lane; in some instances, the system has the capability of moving the vehicle back into the lane. IIHS says lane-departure systems could impact up to 483,000 crashes annually by helping vehicles stay on the road.

## Tips for Teens: Driving at the Beach

Chose the route of the soft surface you will travel on carefully. Be sure to avoid water-saturated areas, areas of high tide, soft sand, and the base of sand dunes. Look for firmer ground, traveling in ruts and tracks that have been successfully used by other vehicles. As you switch to the softer surface, point your wheels straight.

If your vehicle gets stuck, put it in reverse and coast back into your original tracks. Keep your wheels straight. If your tires start to spin, let off the gas a little to try to regain traction. You can also try moving the vehicle slowly forward and then slowly in reverse. If you are unable to move, dig some sand out from around the tires’ surface and place the wooden boards behind your wheels, then back out again. You can also enlist someone with another vehicle to help pull you out with the towing strap or chain.

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## Tips for Teens: How to Recognize an Impaired Driver

Though teens cannot legally drink alcohol, teen drivers still have to contend with intoxicated drivers on the road. Summer is a dangerous time for teen drivers because they spend more time on the road, where they may encounter impaired drivers.

Risk factors for teens on the road in summer include:

- Due to their limited driving experience, teens often have difficulty handling emergency situations; for example, they might try to pass a driver who keeps drifting into their lane.
- Teens may have trouble recognizing when other drivers might be impaired and neglect to allow an adequate space cushion between their vehicle and the vehicles of those drivers.
- Teens often have poor impulse control, which could lead them into playing traffic games with aggressive or impaired drivers, such as racing from one traffic light to another.

Here are some tips on how to recognize an impaired driver:

- their vehicle is straddling two lanes
- they have a close call, such as nearly hitting a parked car
- they make wide, clumsy turns
- they are traveling well below the speed limit (10 mph or more)
- they are following too closely
- they are braking erratically or stopping at inappropriate places (such as at an intersection with a green traffic light)
- their headlights aren't on at night, or they leave their turn signal on for a prolonged time

Teens can use defensive driving techniques for safe summer driving:

- Always wear your safety belt. This is your best defense against impaired drivers.
- Obey the speed limit. Driving too fast means drivers have less space to respond to hazards.
- Avoid being distracted from watching the road by noisy passengers, loud music, or using a cell phone.
- Maintain an adequate space cushion on all sides between your vehicle and other vehicles. If you notice someone driving erratically, increase your space cushion.
- Observe the behavior of other drivers, but keep your eyes moving; don't get so distracted that you miss another hazard.

## Spotlight on Careless Driving: Reading While Driving

Drivers can receive careless driving tickets for a number of reasons. One such offense is reading while driving, which is more common than many people think. Though difficult to prove unless a law enforcement officer observes it, this behavior is a dangerous distraction that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports increases drivers' chances of being involved in motor vehicle crashes by three times.

One reason that people read while driving is [text messaging](#), which has received considerable media attention recently. Though the act of sending a text probably receives more coverage, the act of reading received texts is just as distracting. Drivers who read a text message not only physically take their eyes off the road, they take their cognitive attention off driving to process the message and perhaps formulate a response to it before beginning to type. Drivers who read text messages are just as subject to emotional reactions of surprise, happiness, or anger as those who talk on cell phones, which can mentally distract the driver for several minutes or even for the rest of the driving journey.

Drivers who are sitting in traffic are often tempted to distract themselves from the wait by reading books and newspapers. Unfortunately, some of these drivers [continue to read](#) once traffic is moving again. The risks of doing this in heavy stop-and-go traffic are obvious.

Reading maps and directions is also distracting for drivers, and the act of doing so is often accompanied by the process of looking for an address, the stress of being lost, and/or the confusion of driving in an unfamiliar area. Again, the physical act of reading combined with mental and emotional distress creates a dangerous driving distraction. Drivers who need to consult a map or directions should pull over in a safe place; this will also give them time to orient themselves to their surroundings before continuing the trip. Having a passenger who can act as a navigator is also helpful.

A [defensive driving course](#) may be required to satisfy a careless driving ticket.



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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.

## How Active Participation Helps Teens Understand Safe Driving Concepts

Most adults understand that teens tend to tune out long lectures about safe driving (or anything else), but parents and teachers also know that they have important messages to pass on, and they are sometimes at a loss as to other methods of doing so. Creative thinking in terms of teaching methods, both in the home and at school, can mean the difference between messages that teens will ignore versus those they will integrate into their driving behavior. This is so important with driving; motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Obviously, lectures aren't working.

Recently, First Coast News of Jacksonville, FL profiled four teenagers who had created a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to promote safe driving. The PSA shows a teen driving while listening to music, eating, and using a cell phone to talk and text; she eventually glances at the road just in time to see that it's too late to avoid a motor vehicle crash.

Reporters quizzed the teens on whether or not they'd ever performed any of those unsafe driving behaviors. The teens admitted to doing so but also said that making the PSA had heightened their awareness of how dangerous these behaviors are, which had caused them to curb the behavior. The teens said that creating the PSA had made the consequences of distracted driving, such as getting into a crash and being seriously injured, seem real. This is more of an accomplishment than one might think; teens' brains are not biologically developed enough for them to control impulses and understand the consequences of their behavior, which is why convincing them to drive safely is such an uphill battle.

Another benefit of this type of active participation is that these teens became positive role models for their peers, influencing them to drive more safely. Peer pressure is a reality that must not be ignored; many teens perform more (both in intensity and in number) risky driving behaviors when they are accompanied by teen passengers. Whether the teen driver is bowing to external pressure from friends or internal pressure to show off, the effect is the same. The key is not to try to convince teens to disregard peer pressure, an almost impossible task, but to convert the peer pressure into a positive influence.

Making the PSA also had the effect of helping these teens take responsibility for their driving behavior. Again, this is typically a difficult task. Teens have a variety of sources, legitimate and irrational, to blame for their poor choices; reaching maturity means accepting responsibility for their decisions and the attendant consequences, along with realizing that they are the ones who make the ultimate decision to be safe drivers.

Listening to a lecture is a passive process; making a PSA is an active process because it forces the teen to engage with and think about safe driving concepts. Of course, having every teen in America make a PSA about safe driving would be a logistical nightmare, and due to teens' short attention spans, the experience would soon wear thin. But the concept of having teens participate in an active learning process about safe driving could be utilized in every household and in every school.

Before assigning an active-participation project to teens, consider their interests. Most teens love music, popular television shows, being with friends, and talking about themselves. Most teens are self-conscious about their appearance and are interested in grooming, clothes, and accessories. Many teens also have a special hobby, such as gaming, art, computers, writing, or sports. Many are also interested in exploring new ideas – the perfect time to let them get creative with how to disseminate safe driving messages. Ideas include:

- Designing a poster or series of posters
- Writing a song or an episode of their favorite television show
- Performing a skit with friends
- Designing a clothing/accessory line
- Creating a video game

To avoid boredom, vary the topics assigned to the teen, but for maximum benefit, assign topics that relate to common teen driving mistakes.

To further engage their critical thinking skills, have teens present their messages from other points of view. For example, teens who are interested in politics can give a presidential address about enacting laws to lower teen deaths in motor vehicle crashes; teens who are interested in sports can create an advertising campaign showing how drinking and drugs can impair athletic ability. Until the project is finished, try to provide encouragement and support without too much assistance; let teens follow the research and learning process to its logical conclusion.

*Source: NationalSafetyCommission.com ♦*