

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Killed In Rollover Crash

Investigators said the 16-year-old driver was driving at a high rate of speed, when she hit a dip in the roadway and lost control. The car veered left and she apparently overcorrected to the right causing the car to slide off the paved roadway and then roll until the vehicle finally stopped about 170 feet from the road.

An 18-year-old passenger, was pronounced dead at the scene after he was partially thrown out of the rear passenger side window where he remained pinned for nearly five hours

Source: newsok.com ♦

Lessons Learned

This is yet another example of speed and inexperience combining with deadly results. In this case, the teen veered toward the center of the road and jerked the wheel too sharply to return, resulting in an over-

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correction.

Over-correction is common when a driver, through inattention, veers into another lane or runs off the side of the road. Drivers then quickly jerk the wheel to get the car back where it belongs but that often results in a whip-saw effect that sends the rear of the car skidding out of control. The problem is worse in vehicles with a high center of gravity such as SUVs and mini-vans. The high center of gravity can easily lead to a roll-over.

Over-correcting is a natural response that gets a lot of drivers into trouble. The problem occurs when drivers "react" rather than "act" when they find themselves in such a situation. It takes training and skill to take the correct action to prevent losing control of the vehicle in such situations. That means teens need to be aware of the problem and have a plan in mind in case they ever find themselves in such a situation.

The most common situation that leads to over-correction is running off the shoulder of the road. Instead of jerking the wheel, drivers should hold the wheel steady, take their foot off the gas and gently apply the brakes until they are sure their car is under total control. Before returning to the road, check the rear view mirrors for other traffic to ensure it is safe to return and then, turn the wheel to the left and, once the car is back on the pavement, center the car in the lane.

Veering over into the left lane may require quicker action due to on-coming traffic but the driver must remember not to turn the wheel too sharply.

Correction methods can be taught to teens if you can find a deserted road. Have the teen drive at a low speed and gently leave the road. Teach them when

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they feel the rumbling motion, as their car leaves the pavement, that their first thought, rather than returning immediately to the road, should be to maintain control of the vehicle and slow down until they can safely return to the pavement. Practicing this maneuver several times will teach the teen to act safely rather than reacting by giving into their first instinct to get the car back on the road.

Some newer cars have electric stability control (ESC) systems that work with the anti-lock braking system to prevent over-correction. Congress has passed a law requiring that all new cars have ESC as standard equipment beginning with the 2012 production year. If you are choosing a car for your teen, you may want to look for vehicles that already have this feature.

Of course, all of this can be prevented by maintaining a safe speed, paying attention to the road, and preventing distractions. Driving is a complex process and requires all of the driver's attention at all times.

Teen Sentenced for Crash that Killed Cheerleader

While withholding a formal finding of guilt a judge sentenced a Tampa Bay area teen to six years' probation, including two years' house arrest, and said he could not have a driver's license for at least five years. The teen must perform 100 hours per year of community service, including talking to groups about the driving safety. Except for certain school activities, he will have a 9 p.m. curfew.

Source: tampabay.com ♦

Lessons Learned

At the time of this collision, the teen driver was doing more than 70 mph in a 40-mph zone. There were five teenage passengers in the car, three boys, including the driver, and three girls, no one was wearing seat belts. He bumped a truck driven by a friend, veered right over the curb, through a fence and crashed into a tree. A 14 year old girl was ejected through the sun roof and was killed.

This case was tragic on a lot of different levels but even more so because a parent, who was supposed to set the rules, bore a lot of the responsibility.

In this case, the boy was only 15 years old and had only had his learner's permit for 43 days. He had asked his mother for permission to drive the car to pick up

some classmates and bring them back home. His mother, knowing he was too young to drive alone, gave him the keys to her car and allowed him to drive off by himself.

Under Florida law, teens can't qualify for an operator's permit until they are 16 years old and, while holding a learner's permit, may never drive unless they are accompanied by a licensed driver aged 21 and over.

In what is believed to be the first case of this type in the nation, the mother who gave her under-aged son permission to drive alone was charged with manslaughter. She pled guilty and, under a plea agreement, was sentenced to spend five years on probation, with two of those years on house arrest. Her sentence includes 30 days in jail over the Christmas holidays and she must also pay \$5,000 in restitution for funeral expenses.

The teen driver pled guilty to vehicular homicide without a plea agreement. Under Florida's law, both the mother and son could have received much harsher sentences. In an act of compassion that many parents would not be able to make, the girl's mother said she "did not want the teen driver's future crippled with a criminal conviction that could prevent him from college or employment, despite the accident that took her daughter's life."

While their teen holds a learner's permit, parents must realize that they are responsible for ensuring that the teen is always supervised either by themselves or a trusted licensed driver over the age of 21. Feeling that the teen can be trusted or "he isn't going that far" could be a recipe for tragedy.

Ready to get your Learners Permit?



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Teens and Distracted Driving

"One in four (26%) of American teens of driving age say they have texted while driving, and half (48%) of all teens ages 12 to 17 say they've been a passenger while a driver has texted behind the wheel."

These are the disturbing findings in a survey conducted by the [Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey](#).

What is more disturbing however are the number of teens who have witnessed their [parents doing the same thing](#).

"Much of the public discussion around these behaviors has focused on teens as young, inexperienced drivers, but some of the adults in these young peoples' lives are clearly not setting the best example either," said Mary Madden, Pew senior research specialist who also worked on the survey.

"Teens spoke not only of adults texting at the wheel, but also fumbling with GPS devices and being distracted because they're talking on the phone constantly," she said. "And the reactions from the teens we spoke with ranged from being really scared by these behaviors to feeling as though it wasn't a big deal."

In the words of one teen:

"[My dad] drives like he's drunk. His phone is just like sitting right in front of his face, and he puts his knees on the bottom of the steering wheel and tries to text."

It seems that a lot of parents who want their child to drive safely aren't aware of the driving example they have been setting from the time their child was aware of his or her surroundings.

The US has the one of the worse driver training systems in the industrialized world. Driver training programs are being cut in the schools as a result of budget cutbacks and many states do not require any formal classroom or behind the wheel training. That leaves driver training to the parents who are rarely properly trained to teach their children how to drive.

Another problem with parents trying to teach their teens to drive is that the child may have been observing the parent engage in risky driving behaviors all their life and now see the hypocrisy when a parent says "Drive as I say, not as I do."

The result of this poor training environment is that the teen receives their operator's license, is warned to "be careful out there" and goes solo without proper training

or behind the wheel experience with a trained professional to guide them through the vastly different driving situations they will soon encounter.

Combine this lack of experience with the risky behavior commonly found in teens, the distraction of other teens in the car, and the attitude that "it'll never happen to me", and tragedy is the result. It is a wonder that we don't lose even more teens every year.

Parents need to be aware of the example they are setting for their child while driving. If they want to teach their teen to drive safely, they need to assess their driving behavior and, if necessary, make some drastic changes. They also need to let their teen know why they are changing their driving behavior and set up an honest discussion with the teen about why the changes were necessary and what the desired result of those changes will be.

Often, our driving behaviors become so ingrained in us that we are no longer aware of the danger. Nothing has happened so far, so it must not be a problem. Before beginning the process of teaching your teen to drive safely, you may want to take a driver training course as refresher training.

If your state is not one of the states that require behind the wheel training for teens, you may want to consider enrolling your teen in one any way. When parents are the teachers, often, the training session leads to a lot of arguing and bad feelings between student and teacher. A non-family member can be more objective and teach your teen without all the angst involved in the parent/teen relationship. You should work closely with the driving instructor so that you can reinforce the lessons learned. You may want to take the behind the wheel course yourself before teaching your child to drive.

Along with changing your driving behavior and setting a good driving example for your teen, you need to set very strict rules for your teen and follow up. You need to know where your teen is going, when they expect to return, and with whom they will be driving. Other studies have shown that teens drive more safely when their parents set strict limits on their driving. One effective method for setting and getting your teen to agree to safe driving rules is by use of a [Parent-Teen Driving Contract](#).



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Teaching Your Teen To Drive During The Christmas Shopping Season

The Christmas season is supposed to bring out the best in us but, for drivers, it seems to bring out the worse. The mad rush to commute from work, get to the mall, and complete our shopping in a reasonable amount of time, makes this season one of the most dangerous driving periods of the year. With the arrival of the Christmas shopping season, parents, whose children are learning to drive on a learner's permit, may be reluctant to let their teen drive in such a crazy driving environment.

Only you can decide whether or not your teen may be prepared to drive during this season. For a teen who only has a month or so of driving experience, it is probably not a good idea to allow them to drive in heavy Christmas traffic. However, for a teen with a good deal of driving experience, it is probably the best time to allow them to drive while you are in the seat next to them to give them guidance. This season presents a great teaching experience and an opportunity to open up a dialogue about how not to drive.

Before you and your teen venture out to the mall, you would be wise to discuss the driving environment and let the teen know what he or she can expect. You will need to exercise a great deal of patience, both with each other and with the other drivers on the road.

What kind of driving experiences and teaching moments can you and your teen expect?

- Other Drivers

This season brings out the worst in drivers. If a driver cuts you off, tries to steal your parking space, or is honking the horn when you can't move, don't give into the urge to retaliate by gestures, honking your horn, or flashing your lights. You may wind up pushing an irate driver over the edge into a road rage situation where the other driver may try to attack you in some way. Both you and your teen should keep your cool, pay attention to your own safety and get out of the way of an irate driver as quickly as you can.

Remember that you can't take the right-of-way, you can only give it up to someone else. If there is a conflict with another driver trying to take the right-of-way, it is much safer to give it to them.

- Intersections

Several problems will be encountered at intersections. First, and most dangerous, will be those impatient drivers who will step on the gas in hopes of beating a red light. Many drivers will deliberately run the red light. Once your light turns green, don't be in a hurry to go. Have your teen look in all directions to make sure that no one is trying to run the red light before proceeding.

The other issue you will have to contend with are those drivers who pull forward into intersections when traffic ahead is stopped and wind up blocking the intersection when the light changes. Your teen will need to stop at the stop line before the intersection and wait until traffic ahead has cleared enough to allow her to proceed completely through the intersection.

- Pedestrians

There is probably no time of year where we encounter more pedestrians on the road. Remember that pedestrians in a crosswalk, whether marked or not, always have the right-of-way. Pedestrians can't move as fast as a car can, especially when they are burdened down with packages, so don't expect them to jump out of your way. Remember also that pedestrians may not hear you coming. Their minds are occupied just like yours. Their ears may be wrapped in a muffler or a hat or the pedestrian could be totally deaf.

Be careful and have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.



"NO, YELLOW DOES NOT MEAN SPEED THROUGH THE INTERSECTION!"

