

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Driver 19, Who Killed Woman after Prom, Apologizes

The teenager told police he had been drinking alcohol after his school prom in the hours before the crash, plead guilty to homicide by reckless operation of a motor vehicle, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, and transporting alcohol as a minor.

The Judge called the case the toughest he has had in his 10 years on the bench because it was clear that the crash was not malicious, and that the circumstances of it were not intentional. But he still found the teen was reckless in deciding to drive after a night without sleep and after drinking alcohol.

The crash occurred at around 7:30 a.m. last May. The night before, the teen attended his high school prom, which included an evening cruise, and came back around 4 a.m. After the event, the teen and friends went to the beach. By 7:30 a.m., he was tired. He had two occupants in his car and was driving when he nodded while taking a turn. As he awoke he swerved the car to the right, onto the curb, striking the victims.

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For Teens and their Parents



The teen apologized for causing the car crash last May that killed a woman and severely injured her daughter, as they walked with their dog. "I truly apologize from the bottom of my heart," he said, speaking in a deep tone. "There is not a day that goes by that I don't think of it. I'm so sorry, and I hope you can find it in your hearts to forgive me."

Source: <http://www.boston.com> ♦

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## Lessons Learned

Prom is such an exciting time! Everyone is ready to celebrate! But while you are making your plans for the night also make your back up plans. Keep yourself safe and remind your friends to have a safe Prom.

- Consider a limo. If several people go in together- it is not that expensive.
- If you or another teen is driving, limit the passengers to one. Per passenger, the risk of a crash increases.
- Have the numbers of trustworthy cabs programmed in your cell phone and the cash to pay them.
- Make sure you have had plenty of rest before the big night. Sleep deprivation is dangerous on the road and can mimic the effects of driving intoxicated.
- Think through and talk with your friends about pressure situations. Have a plan to handle them ahead of time.

### Prom night

- Have your cell phone charged and with you at all times. Never leave a drink unattended or accept a drink from someone else. If so, get a new drink.
- Do not ride with someone who is fatigued or impaired in anyway. Make sure your friends don't either.
- Do not drive if you are fatigued or impaired in way.
- Wear your seatbelt. 70% of teens killed on prom weekends are not wearing seatbelts. [NHTSA, SADD]
- At all times, know where you are and where you are going. Make sure you know where your friends are and your friends and your parents know where you are.
- Trust your instincts. If you are uncomfortable



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somewhere, leave immediately.

- Drive defensively on the road and ask your passenger to be alert also. Prom is a high risk driving time.

Plan ahead, communicate, make good decisions and have a safe prom night.

## High School Students Drown After Car Rolls Into Ditch

Authorities say two students drowned after the car they were in crashed into a ditch. Police say around 7am the car hit a puddle in the road and lost control. The car flipped and landed upside down in a ditch, completely submerged. The driver was able to break free of the vehicle but was swept down stream where his body was found. The passenger was found dead still strapped in the passenger seat.

Source: <http://johnston.mync.com> ♦

## Lessons Learned

If your vehicle is thrown into the water:

- Stay CALM. Focusing on the situation is a necessary part of surviving a water crash.
- Unlock doors, roll down all windows and open any doors before you submerge. As the vehicle descends the option to open the door is unavailable.
- Turn your headlights on to help you see in the water and rescuers to locate the vehicle.

In most water crashes, a vehicle will float for a period of 3 or 4 minutes before the weight of the engine pulls the vehicle under. This precious time may allow you to unbuckle your seat belt, roll down your window and get out.

Escaping through the trunk is another option. Make sure your vehicle has access from the back seat and you know the location of the trunk release.

If the vehicle is immediately pulled under water, you will need to wait until the water level inside the vehicle completely fills the vehicle. This will equalize the pressure and you will be able to open the door.

Many experts recommend that if you cannot immediately get out of the vehicle before it sinks; keep your seatbelt in the locked position.

- Break the driver or passenger's side windows. Apply force to the corner of the glass not the center.

The front and rear windshields are made of tempered glass and are very difficult to break. Have something in your vehicle that can break the window, an escape hammer or pointed tool available in the car. A spring-loaded center punch tool works above and below water. Whichever you decide, it must be attached securely to the dashboard or driver's side door where you can easily reach it.

After the window is broken the water will rush in. Keeping your seatbelt in the locked position will protect from the rush of water pushing against you and trapping you underneath

the dashboard.

- Remove any heavy clothing or shoes.
- Unlock your seatbelt and that of any others.
- Take a deep breath and get yourself and any others out of the vehicle.
- Avoid kicking your feet and injuring others.
- Swim up to the surface in the direction of your air bubbles.

Be aware of your surroundings and be prepared for any currents. Look for obstacles in the water that you may hold on to as you gather strength. Only go back down to the vehicle if there is someone else still trapped inside. Make sure you have the physical ability and swimming skills to do so.

Preparation of what to do in advance and using the time wisely during the situation are critical to a successful recovery!

## Tips for Parents: Teaching your Teen to Cope with a Crash

While everyone is hopeful that they will never have to encounter a crash, the statistics show that many of us will. So as parents, how can we best prepare our teens for experience?

### Before a situation arises:

Start by having a [Parent-Teen Driving Contract](#). This is your first line of defense in advance preparation. The Parent Teen contract addresses the driving rules, privileges and consequences in advance. The terms are straight forward and if something does happen that violates the contract, the emotions involved are diminished.

Make a checklist of what to do if there is a crash or vehicle breakdown and place it in the glove box.

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Many times during these situations, anxiety is high and a checklist will help to restore clear thinking. Be sure to list important numbers to call and any insurance or health policy numbers that may be needed. Stock safety items in your vehicle: a seat belt cutter, a glass buster, tire gauge, flashlight, blanket, waterproof matches, emergency flashers, water, non perishable snacks, and a car tool kit. That way you know that the vehicle is prepared for an emergency.

Keep a lessons learned file, with safety related and driving related information in it. Think through the "what if" scenarios and discuss with your teen how to respond to situations so that you both feel confident and prepared.

### **If a crash does occur:**

Recognize the emotional toll your teen may go through in a crash. Questions can range from: Why did this happen? How can it be fixed? What do I do now? Should I have seen it coming? To more serious questions of will I ever want to drive again? What if ...? These questions can be haunting for a teen experiencing a crash. Whether it is a major or minor crash, it can open a flood gate of emotions for your teen including, anger, anxiety, guilt, sorrow and fear.

For Parents, the emotions can be overwhelming too. How much is this going to cost me? What will happen next? Did I adequately prepare them to handle these types of driving situations? Is there more I should have done? In addition, any injuries, insurance issues, repair arrangements, alternate transportation arrangements and the stress can be extreme not to mention if there are any citations, law enforcement issues, or the possibility of future legal action for or against you.

Keep in mind, that most people do not intend to have a crash as they embark upon their day and as frustrating as it may be to everyone involved it was unintentional. So be a role model in the crisis that occurs and approach the situation with empathy, rational behavior and treat everyone with respect. Behavior breeds behavior. If you begin to overreact, it will filter down to your teen and other family members and be processed either externally or internally.

### **After the crash:**

Monitor how you and your teen handle this challenge. Teens can be very emotional and they can also be great at masking their feelings. Seek out your teen to discuss what has happened in a calm and relaxed environment. Steer

the conversation away from blame and focus instead on how your teen is doing and what they are feeling. Avoid diminishing their fears, guilt or concerns. Listen with an open mind, realizing how important it is to talk it through. Activate support from other family members, mentors and friends. Watch for changes in behavior, friends, or activities. They can indicate coping in an unhealthy way.

Teach your teen stress reduction exercises. Deep breathing exercises, muscle relaxation techniques, calming music, positive self talk and visualization all help, especially before your teen drives.

It is important for your teen to start driving on small and frequent trips with short distances. Force them to drive a little each day. The longer they wait, the harder it will be. By setting these small goals, driving becomes more manageable.

Consider having your teen take a Defensive Driving Course, either online, in a classroom or behind the wheel. Not only will the class offer additional defensive driving strategies, but it will help to build confidence and skills behind the wheel.

Help your teen to focus on the positive. Find positive stories on overcoming difficulties to read, listen to or watch. Discovering what others have been able to overcome can be empowering. Spur them to post a positive message where they can see it every day, maybe on a mirror, in a locker or on a note book. End the day with a gratitude journal, by writing down what they have to be grateful for that day, they will end the day on a great note!

Encourage your teen to continue to talk with others about it. Have other people learn from their experience. Discuss the dangers of being on "Auto Pilot" when you drive and of Driving Distracted.

Lastly, recognize and applaud your teen for how far they have come. They are learning to overcome difficulties and learning a life skill!



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