

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Parents Held Responsible For Teen Drinking Parties

A Florida woman found guilty of hosting an open house party and contributing to the delinquency of minors was sentenced to 364 days in jail.

Source: <http://www.news4jax.com> ♦

A judge accused of allowing underage drinking at her home has resigned her post. The attorney, who served as a magistrate judge in Georgia, faces 10 counts of furnishing alcohol to those under 21 and faces additional charges for contributing to the delinquency of minors and obstruction.

Source: <http://www.ajc.com> ♦

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For Teens and their Parents



Lessons Learned

These are just two of many cases throughout the nation where parents have either actively hosted or knew of parties involving underage drinking in their homes.

In the case of the Florida woman, she was not only hosting but, according to witnesses, was seen taking shots and smoking marijuana with the teens. This case turned tragic when two of the teens left the party and were burned beyond recognition after crashing their car. The teen driver had a BAC of .18; double the legal limit. The mother, originally charged with manslaughter, was convicted of hosting an open house party and contributing to the delinquency of minors. Had prosecutors been able to prove the manslaughter charge, she could have faced up to 15 years in prison.

Parents of the other teens involved were disappointed with the sentence. Some said they thought the party was being chaperoned by a responsible adult. They would have never let their teens attend had they known the parent would be supplying alcohol and drugs and drinking along with the kids.

In another Florida case, the parents were charged with hosting an underage drinking party after photos of the party showed up on Facebook.

Research into this issue shows that many of these parties end tragically. One "responsible adult" who hosted a party took away the keys as the teens entered but later, went to bed leaving the keys on the kitchen counter. One teen is dead and another is in jail on a vehicular manslaughter charge as a result.

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It is such a problem that many municipalities have enacted laws specifically banning such parties and holding the homeowner responsible; even if they were away from home at the time.

In the case of the Judge from Georgia, she told police she would rather have the teens drinking in her home, rather than "out driving around,"

This seems to be a common excuse for hosting teen parties but state and local governments hold a different view. Every state has a Zero Tolerance law making it illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to consume alcohol. Adults who provide alcohol to minors are committing a crime and governments are actively prosecuting those who host such parties or purchase the alcohol.

Responsible parenting means doing everything in our power to prevent underage drinking; the excuse that "They are going to do drink anyway, why not do it under my supervision" is irresponsible at best and criminal at worst.

Teens Killed in Single Car Crashes

A central Iowa teen died in a one-car crash near Des Moines. The Sheriff's office says a car driven by an 18-year-old went out of control about 4 A.M., hit a ditch and rolled at least once, ending up on the passenger side.

Source: <http://www.radioiowa.com>

Lessons Learned

A review of teen car crashes from the past month shows a significant number of single car crashes. These crashes normally occur when the teen loses control of the vehicle and runs off the road. There are a variety of reasons for this type of crash but it all boils down to basically two things; overconfidence and lack of experience behind the wheel.

Most of these crashes are due to two types of driving

errors.

- High speed - The teen drives too fast for conditions and fails to negotiate a curve in the road or is unable to stop in time to avoid a hazard. Young drivers often don't realize just how hard it is to control a speeding car; it looks so easy in the movies but in real life, the laws of physics take over and a speeding car just can't stop that quickly.
- Distracted Driving – In this type of crash, the teen is distracted from watching the road (often because of texting or other teens in the car) and runs off the side of the road. The natural instinct in this type of situation is to turn the wheel sharply to get back on the road but many drivers over-correct sending the car out of control and, in some cases, flip the car over, sending it tumbling down the road.

Most of these crashes tend to happen late at night so fatigue, alcohol consumption, or both contribute to the teen's inability to control the car.

Most states have graduated driving laws that prevent a teen from driving late at night. These laws were enacted to prevent just this type of crash.

Parents need to monitor their teen's driving and prevent them from driving late at night. Parents also need to train their teen on the proper procedures for recovery if they should run off the side of the road. Instead of jerking the wheel back onto the road, the driver should keep the wheel straight and gently apply the brakes. Once the vehicle has slowed sufficiently, they should check their mirrors to see if it is safe to return to the road and then turn the wheel to the left

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until both wheels are back on the solid surface.

Under the graduated driving laws of many states, teens are limited from the number of teen passengers they can carry until they reach the age of 18. The more teens there are in a car, the greater the driving distractions. Make sure your teen obeys the law and monitor who is riding as a passenger.

Tips for Parents: School Start Times Related To Teen Crash Rate

Yet another study has come out showing the relationship between school start times and the teen crash rate. This study shows that there is a significant difference between the crash rates for students whose school starts early in the morning and those whose classes start later.

It has long been known that teens require more sleep than adults or younger children. It isn't just a lazy teen thing. With all the changes and development going on in a teen's body, more sleep is needed to handle the growth and brain development needs. Teens, on average need about 9 ¼ hours of sleep per night. However, according to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), teens normally average only about 7 hours of sleep per school night.

Unfortunately, many school districts haven't caught up with this research and many high schools start as early as 7:00 to 7:30 AM. In this study, the authors compared the crash rates of two different, nearby school districts. One district started school at 7:20 AM while the other started classes at 8:40 AM.

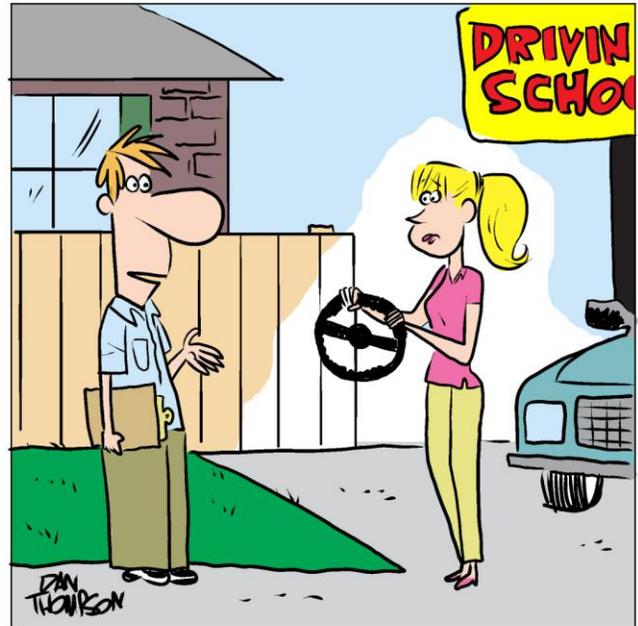
For the district beginning at 7:20 AM, the crash rate was 65.4 crashes for every 1,000 students. For the district that started at 8:40, the crash rate was 46.2 for every 1,000 students; a significant difference.

Research by the NSF has shown that lack of sleep leads to more "fall asleep" crashes at night. Lack of sleep also keeps teens from being able to remain alert, solve problems, cope with stress, and retain information; all critical skills for driving.

For the same reasons, it isn't surprising that some of the studies on sleep deprivation in teens also show a direct correlation between school start times and test scores. Those schools with later start times show an increase in standardized test scores

compared to districts with earlier start times.

Such a simple and inexpensive solution as starting school an hour later can not only increase test scores but can also save lives. If your school district starts early, it is time to start lobbying members of the school board to move the start times back. The educational future and the safety of our teens depend on it.



"TRY AND RELAX A LITTLE MORE THE NEXT TIME WE GO ON THE HIGHWAY."

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