Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Speed Kills

A Texas teen is dead after the car he was a passenger in early Monday flipped after driving too fast.

The teen driver and four other people were in a car speeding west on Lake Arthur Drive at about 4:40 a.m. when the driver of the car lost control, hit a curb and flipped. One of the other people in the car is serious but stable, and the other three suffered minor injuries.

Source: http://www.beaumontenterprise.com ♦

A Long Island teen was killed in a horrific wreck that left two of his friends critically injured.

The impact from the accident Tuesday afternoon was so violent that the car finally came to rest only after hitting a tree 150 feet from the intersection.

Moments earlier, he blew through a stop sign, smacked into another car and snapped a utility pole like a toothpick, cops said.

Source: http://www.nypost.com ♦

Lessons Learned

These are just two of a number of high speed, single vehicle crashes in the previous month of that led to the deaths and injuries of teen age drivers and passengers.

A news release by the Allstate Insurance Company announcing the results of an Allstate Foundation study on teen drivers released in 2008 said: "While parents surveyed generally identify drunk driving as their greatest concern, speeding is actually the leading cause cited in fatal crashes involving teen drivers nationwide. Law enforcement cited speeding as a factor in 34.4% of fatal crashes nationally."

We do tend to focus on drunk and distracted driving too often while ignoring the number one killer of teen drivers – **speed.**

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For Teens and their Parents

Inside This Issue

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), speeding was a contributing factor in 31 percent of all (not just teens) fatal crashes, and 11,674 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes in 2008.

In 2008, 19.7 percent of the teen drivers involved in fatal crashes had previous speeding convictions.

Among 15 to 20 year olds, males were involved in fatal crashes due to speeding at a much higher rate (37 percent) than females (24 percent).

Speeding is common on America's roads and many don't see why it is such a big problem however speeding is a major factor in fatal crashes for several reasons.

1. **Reaction Time and Braking Distance** – Most people don't realize how much distance is covered in a short amount of time. At 55 mph, a car is traveling at 88 feet per second. Once a driver realizes there is a problem ahead, decides on whether to steer around or brake, and then acts on that decision, anywhere from one to one and a half seconds could have elapsed. That means the car will travel about 120 feet before the brakes are fully applied. A car with good brakes and tires on a dry road surface will travel an additional 126 feet after the brakes are applied before it comes to a complete stop. That is a total of 246 feet from the time the emergency is realized until the car comes to a complete stop.

   Add common distractions such as cell phones, other teen passengers, or alcohol and that reaction time could take an additional one to two seconds.

   The greater the speed, the less time there is to react to an emergency.

2. **Inability to negotiate curves** – Most teen crashes happen at night and most happen in rural areas on two-lane roads. Dark country roads make it hard to see and anticipate curves ahead. A lot of the crashes happen because the teen driver is driving too fast for conditions and fails to negotiate a curve in the road; ultimately crashing into a ditch or slamming into a tree by the side of the road.

   Remember that posted speed limits are set by traffic engineers for ideal road conditions. Dark, wet roads are not ideal driving conditions.

   Slower speeds allow the driver to see curves or hazards ahead and adjust their speed to road conditions.

3. **Greater crash forces** – Obviously, the greater the speed, the greater the crash forces. A vehicle leaving the road and crashing into a tree at high speed doesn't stand much of a chance.

   A 3,000 lb car hitting a tree at 30 mph will exert a crash force of 20,305 lbs. The same car hitting a tree at 40 mph will exert a crash force of 36,099 lbs.

   Slower speeds mean less damage and a greater chance of surviving a crash.

Unfortunately, many teens get the message about speeding from their parents long before they get their learner's permit and begin learning to drive Parents who regularly travel over the speed limit and who stomp on the gas to beat a yellow light are sending their child a strong message; "Safe driving rules are really only just for passing the driving test." Make sure you don't send the same message to your teen.

Winter Weather Kills Inexperienced Teen Drivers

Teen Could Be Charged In Deadly Crash

A teenage girl was killed in a crash on an ice covered Georgia road that could land her best friend in jail. The 18 year old victim was riding in a car driven by her best friend, also 18, when they hit a patch of ice. The care then slid into traffic coming from the other direction, police said.

Source: http://wsbradio.com♦

Curve, black ice blamed in fatal crash

A hairpin curve and a patch of black ice are being blamed for a tragic car crash that killed one teen and left three others injured.

Source: http://abclocal.go.com♦

These are just two of numerous weather related crashes over the last month that have left a number of dead and severely injured teens.

Just like last winter, the country is experiencing fierce winter storms and record snow falls and it is still early in the winter. Many areas of the country where snowfall is rare have already experienced multiple winter storms in just the first full month of winter. January 11th, saw snowfall in every state but Florida (Hawaii's snow was on the top of very high mountains). On February 13th of 2010, thanks to a small dusting of snow in the Florida panhandle, all 50 states were covered in snow on a single day.

Climate change skeptics have a hard time believing that global warming could cause this much snow and ice but climate specialists don't see a contradiction.

According to Kevin Trenberth, a prominent climate scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Colorado, "Warmer water means more water vapor rises up into the air and what goes up must come down. So, one of the consequences of a warming ocean near a coastline like the East Coast and Washington, D.C., for instance, is that you can get dumped on with more snow partly as a consequence of global warming,"

What all this means is that more and more teens, especially in the south where snowfall is rare, are getting their initial training on how to drive in snow on crowded, snow packed or icy roads. Unfortunately, they probably have received very little training or guidance from their parents because their parents are just as inexperienced at driving on snow and ice as the teen.

So, how should you drive on snow and ice?

First, don't drive at all unless it is absolutely necessary. A teen's perception of what is necessary may differ tremendously from that of their parents so it is up to parents to prevent teens from driving when they don't have to. Driving an injured person to the hospital may be a necessity, going on a date or shopping isn't.

Second, be aware that melting snow the day before will freeze overnight and will cover the roads in a treacherous coating of up to an inch of pure ice.

Atlanta experienced a full week of conditions like this.

Even though it appears that the ice has all melted, patches of "black ice" (small thin patches of ice that blend into the roadway) can exist for some time after all the other snow and ice has melted. Black ice is especially treacherous in shaded areas.

Bridges and overpasses will be the first areas to ice up and the last areas to melt. Unlike the ground, which may retain some heat, bridges are surrounded on the top and bottom by freezing temperatures.

Avoiding Skidding:

- Speed is especially dangerous in snow and ice. Most state driving manuals suggest cutting your speed by half in snow and cutting it to a crawl in icy conditions.
- According to NHTSA, "Speeding was a factor in 54 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred when there was snow or slush on the road and in 59 percent of those that occurred on icy roads."
- Don't make any sudden changes in speed or direction.
- Maintain a larger following distance between you and the car ahead so that you have more time to react.
- Slow down gently with a slow steady application of your brakes. Let up off your brakes if you feel your wheels start to lock up. If your vehicle has anti-lock brakes, don't pump the brakes.
- Drive in a lower gear if necessary.

If your car starts to skid:

- Don't slam on your brakes; that will only make the skid worse.
- Steer in the direction of the skid. If the rear of the car starts to skid to the right, steer to the right to counteract the skid.
- Keep steering in the direction you want the vehicle to go.
- You might have to steer left and right a few times to get your vehicle completely under control.

Tips for Parents: Technology VS Parenting

Over the past couple of years a lot of tremendous new technologies have come on the scene to help make driving safer for teens. Everything from devices that disable cell phones when the keys are put in the ignition to GPS devices that allow a parent to monitor the current location of their teen and that also track the teen's speed and braking; providing reports to the parent's computer or cell phone. Auto makers are installing back-up cameras and electronic stabilization to prevent over-correcting and skidding. Manufacturers are also advertising cars that automatically apply the brakes when the car senses it is too close to the car ahead. All of this technology is great but the primary device to keep a teen from taking too many risks on the road is good parenting.

Studies have shown that parents who give an equal amount of praise and discipline have a greater impact on their teen than anything else. A teen who knows he or she is appreciated but who also knows there will be severe consequences when they do something stupid, tends to toe the line.

Studies have also shown that teens that don't own their own car but have to borrow a family car instead, tend to take fewer chances on the road. Unlike a teen that only has him or herself to blame if he or she wrecks their own car, a teen that has to borrow a car fears the wrath of the car's owner if they are involved in a collision.

Setting clear rules and expectations before the teen starts to drive trumps all the technological gadgets. Ensuring the teen knows that there will be consequences and signing a driving contract with your teen is the best technology of them all.