

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Too Late To Apologize

Police said the 19 year old driver then ran another stop sign at Brown Street and Easton Avenue, after which he said "sorry" to the other driver and attempted to walk away.

Source:<http://www.wfmz.com> ♦

Lark apologized to Sauls' family, saying, "Every day I wish it was me. Every day of my life. It should have been me. I take full responsibility for what I did,"

Source:<http://www.ajc.com> ♦

## Lessons Learned

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For Teens and their Parents



We all learn, when we are little, to apologize for a mistake or a misdeed. If we hurt our little brother or sister, we are supposed to say "sorry" and that should make everything better. If we say something bad, we can "take it back."

Part of the process of learning socialization skills as we grow up is to accept responsibility for our actions and to apologize for those actions. When we were little, apologizing or taking it back was usually enough but, as we grow older, simply saying "sorry" can't begin to make up for the harm we have caused. The people we have harmed want and demand a stronger form of justice and they deserve it.

When we take on the responsibility of driving a car, we are supposed to be old enough to take on adult responsibilities and there are severe consequences when we fail to live up to those responsibilities. Taking childish actions behind the wheel of a car can have tragic results and as the Timbaland song says, "It's too late to apologize."

The 19 year old young man in the article above chose to drink and drive and, after causing two collisions, in his drunken state, seemed to think that saying sorry was enough. It wasn't. He was charged with aggravated assault and several DUI charges. He was committed to prison on \$15,000 bail. He got off easy.

The 17 year old boy in the second story also chose to



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drive drunk but in this case, his actions led to the death of a 16 year old friend and injured several others. In the courtroom at his trial, he apologized to the victim's family saying "Every day I wish it was me. Every day of my life. It should have been me. I take full responsibility for what I did." He is taking full responsibility as he serves a seven year prison term.

In addition to his prison sentence, ten others have been charged with supplying alcohol to the teens at a party.

No matter how much they apologize, they can't take back the actions that they are responsible for and they can't bring back a life that was snuffed out too early by a stupid choice. How can an apology make up for that? It's too late to apologize!

## Too Many Trees

State investigators say a 17-year-old girl was killed while negotiating a slight turn in the roadway, the car crossed over the northbound lane and struck a tree.

Source: <http://www.wfmz.com> ♦

The car was carrying six teenagers when it crashed head-on into a tree. Five were injured, two critically; one later died from injuries suffered in the crash.

Source: <http://www.post-gazette.com> ♦

## Lessons Learned

More than a dozen teens were killed over the past month and many more were injured when their car left the road and crashed into a tree or some other type of stationary object.

We keep harping on this issue but teens still continue to die in single car crashes more than any other type of crash. There are several factors that lead to this type of crash.

**Two lane roads** – Most of these crashes happen on two lane country or suburban roads. People fear the danger of high speed interstate highways but most crashes occur on two lane country roads. This type of road leads to a lot of crashes because they are narrow, with little room for escape; there are a lot of no-passing zones that lead impatient people to take chances and there are a lot of curves that a speeding drivers fail to negotiate.

**Speed** – Speed is primarily responsible in these types of crashes. Drivers drive too fast for conditions and, when there is a sharp curve or an obstacle in the road, they can't slow fast enough to stay on the road. High speed gives the driver less time to react and adds to the crash forces.

**Distractions** – There are too many driving distractions that tempt teens to pay less attention to the road ahead. In quite a few of these crashes there were three or more teen passengers in the car. The more teen passengers a teen driver has, the more distractions there are for the driver. Add cell phones, texting, and eating to the mix and it becomes too overwhelming for the driver to deal with.

**Alcohol** – In several of these crashes alcohol was a factor. According to *the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)*, in 2009, 29 percent of the speeding drivers under age 21 who were involved in fatal crashes, also had a BAC of .08. That is almost one-third of all the fatal crashes.



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**Seat Belts** – According to NHTSA data, in 2009, only 49 percent of speeding passenger vehicle drivers under age 21 who were involved in fatal crashes were wearing seat belts at the time of the crash.

Any one of these factors by themselves can lead to a deadly crash. Combined, the chances of a deadly crash increase exponentially.

## **Tips for Parents: Study Shows That GDL Laws Work; To An Extent.**

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in September shows that the death rate for teen drivers under the age of 18 has fallen dramatically over the past several years. However, the good news in this study comes with a downside; the rate of fatal crashes for teen drivers over the age of 18 has risen.

The reason for the increase isn't totally certain but there are a couple of factors that some feel have led to the increase.

The [Graduated Driving License \(GDL\)](#) laws are working as they were designed. GDL laws place restrictions on new teen drivers that limit the number of passengers they can carry, the hours that they can drive, and their ability to use cell phones while driving.

These laws were designed to limit all of the distractions that lead to so many teen deaths and, according to the researchers, they have resulted in 1,348 fewer crashes among 16 year olds.

Part of the reason for the increase in the death rate for 18 year olds is that they are now free of those restrictions and, with more passengers in the car and the ability to drive late at night, they may be entering into driving situations that they have never experienced before and are unable to cope with.

Another reason that some experts have noted is that, with the restrictions placed on 16 year olds to complete

driver training prior to getting their license, many teens are now waiting until they are 18 before getting a license. At the age of 18, there is often no requirement for any type of formal classroom or behind the wheel training. The requirement to hold a learner's permit for a year and document up to 50 hours of supervised driving experience is also lifted for 18 year olds.

By waiting until they are 18, these drivers can often get their license in just a few weeks by passing what is generally a pretty easy driving test at the DMV. They are foregoing a lot of good training that teaches them the skills necessary to avoid collisions on the road.

If you have a teen at home who is waiting until age 18, you should insist that he or she still take all of the required courses required of 16 year olds and get at least 50 hours (ten at night) of supervised driving experience before allowing them to get their license.



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