

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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How Much Is A Life Worth?

On May 15, 2010, Rhonda Callahan and her 51-year-old husband were on their way to a classic car show in Bowie. They were traveling north on Route 301 in their classic 1934 Chevy Street Rod.

Investigators say 19-year-old Brittany Lynn Sadosky drove through a stop sign and crashed into them. Rhonda's husband, Douglas, was killed instantly.

Source: <http://www.myfoxdc.com> ♦

Lessons Learned

The driver, who was 18 years old at the time of the

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For Teens and their Parents



crash, admitted in court that she had been talking on her cell phone at the time of this collision. As a result, she missed the stop sign, drove through and crashed into the other car, instantly killing the driver and severely injuring the passenger. The passenger spent five weeks in the hospital fighting for her life.

The young woman was charged and went to trial for Vehicular Manslaughter.

In addition to talking on the cell phone, the young woman had three other passengers in her car. It has been a long known fact that, the more passengers a teen carries, the greater the driving distractions. The prosecutors tried to make the case that she should have allowed one of her passengers to take the call so that she could concentrate on driving.

On October 19, 2011, a Maryland jury found the 19 year old not guilty of vehicular manslaughter. Instead, the young woman will receive a **\$500 fine and one point** on her driving record for Negligent Driving.

The State Attorney said that prosecutors couldn't prove that the young driver was grossly negligent, as Maryland law requires for a vehicular manslaughter

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conviction.

Maryland law currently prohibits drivers over the age of 18 from using a hand held phone while driving except to start or terminate a hands free call or to turn off the cell phone. However, the use of a hand held cell phone by a driver is only a secondary offense, meaning that officers can only cite a driver for using a hand held phone after witnessing and stopping the driver for a more serious offense. The penalty for using a hand held phone is \$40 for a first offense.

Both the State's Attorney and the victim's family are calling on Maryland legislators to toughen the law and to increase the penalties for distracted driving.

Three Families Ripped Apart

Friends and family are mourning twin brothers killed in a crash with a teen girl early Monday morning in Arlington.

Police say one of the twins was driving a Honda Accord around 3 a.m. at a high rate of speed westbound on Green Oaks when he lost control and crashed into a tree.

The car split in half on impact and burst into flames. The driver and his brother, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, died at the scene.

Source: <http://www.myfoxdfw.com> ♦

ARLINGTON, Texas - Police say a fourth person has died of injuries suffered last week in a one-vehicle wreck in North Texas.

The 18-year-old died Tuesday. He had been

hospitalized in Fort Worth since the Oct. 10 wreck. He was a passenger in a car that went out of control and struck a tree, killing twin brothers and another passenger.

Source: <http://www.myfoxdfw.com> ♦

Lessons Learned

While the driver of this vehicle was 21 years old, two other teenagers died in a crash that had all the common characteristics of most teen collisions.

Late night – Most collisions involving teen drivers happen late at night. In this case, the crash happened around 3:00 AM.

Multiple passengers – This car was carrying a total of five people. The more passengers there are in a young driver's car, the greater the distractions and, for young men, an opportunity to show off.

Speed – It was reported that the driver was driving at a high rate of speed when he lost control of the vehicle. Speed reduces the reaction time available to a driver and, on curves or hills, the laws of motion tend to keep the vehicle moving in one direction – off the road. High speed also contributes to the crash forces.

Alcohol use – The police reported that there was evidence of alcohol at the scene. Alcohol use affects the driver's judgment and slows reaction time.



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Over-confidence – Most young drivers are over-confident in their driving skills and abilities, convincing themselves that they can handle all distractions, speed, and still drive safely.

Single vehicle crash – Most teens die in single vehicle crashes. Their over-confidence along with all the factors mentioned above lead them losing control of the vehicle and driving off the road.

Tips for Parents: Teens Most Likely To Crash In Their First Month Of Solo Driving

A study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that teen drivers are fifty percent more likely to crash in their first month of solo driving than they are after a year of driving experience on their own.

The researchers used in-car cameras to follow new North Carolina drivers during the last six months of instruction with their parents in the car and their first six months driving alone.

The study showed that, in the first month of solo driving almost sixty percent of the crashes were caused by **failure to reduce speed, inattention, and failure to yield.**

They also found that certain types of crashes or near crashes occurred at relatively high rates at first and then declined as the driver gained more experience. They used the example of crashes involving left hand turns that quickly diminished reflecting the teen's inexperience followed by rapid learning.

The study pointed out driving abilities that parents need to place more emphasis on and to provide more instruction to their teens.

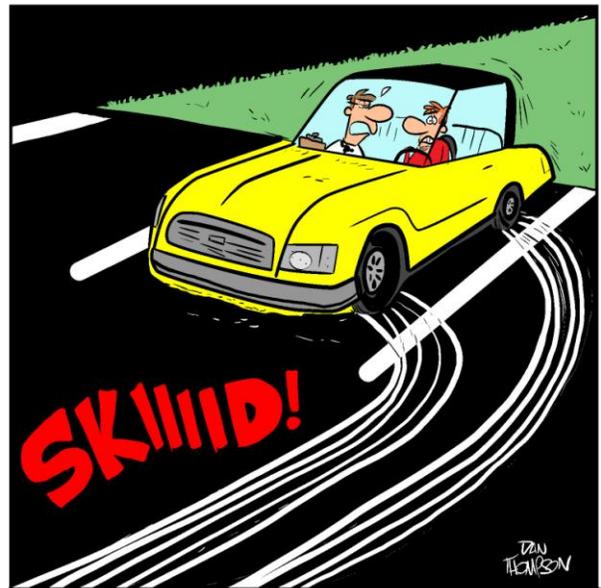
The cameras followed the teens during their typical day-to-day driving and captured some close calls due to texting, driving distractions and running red lights.

The AAA foundation for Highway safety posted some of the videos online and they can be seen at:

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=UnsupervisedDrivingclips>

Some of the videos are quite revealing about the teens' attitude toward some of the mistakes they made.

The study also shows the importance of [Graduated Drivers Licensing Laws \(GDL\)](#) in reducing teen deaths on the highway. If you are unfamiliar with your state's GDL laws, you should visit your state's DMV website or get a copy of your state's driving manual. If the GDL laws in your state are not as strong as in other states, you can enforce your own GDL laws on your teen. Studies show that parental involvement in a teen's driving goes a long way toward preventing crashes.



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