

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Driver Was Texting In Deadly Missouri Traffic Pileup Involving 2 School Buses

A 19-year-old driver was texting just before his pickup truck, two school buses and a tractor truck collided in a deadly pileup on an interstate highway in Missouri last year, the National Transportation Safety Board said Monday.

Two people — the pickup driver and a 15-year-old student on one of the buses — were killed and 38 others were injured.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com> ♦

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For Teens and their Parents



Lessons Learned

Although this crash happened more than a year ago, it made news in the past month because of the impact it had on a decision by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

The 19 year old driver in this crash was texting up to the moment of impact. He never hit his brakes when a truck stopped in front of him. This caused a chain reaction pile up when two school busses that were following also crashed. Photos of the crash show the young man's pickup truck folded in two like a fortune cookie.

This crash, among many other deadly crashes, led the five members NTSB to unanimously recommend that all wireless communication devices be prohibited while driving. Not just texting or hand held cell phones but hands free devices as well as laptops and tablet computers. The only exception would be GPS navigation systems.

While their recommendation doesn't carry the weight of law, their decision will have an impact on possible federal and state laws and regulations.

According to information available on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA), Distracted Driving website (<http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/index.html>) "Using a cell phone while driving - whether it's hand-held or hands-free delays a driver's reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent." and "Drivers who use hand-held devices are 4 times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves."

The danger is even greater for teens. "Teen drivers are more likely than other age groups to be involved in a fatal crash where distraction is reported. In 2009, 16% of teen drivers involved in a fatal crash were reported to have been distracted." "40% of all American teens say they have been in a car when the driver used a cell phone in a way that put people in danger."

A survey of six thousand drivers on cell phone use released by NHTSA this month shows that, when it comes to cell phone use, drivers are hypocrites. The survey revealed that many drivers don't think it's dangerous when they use a cell phone while driving — only when others do. The survey also showed that drivers younger than 25 are two to three times more likely than older drivers to read or send text messages or e-mails.

When it comes to use of all types of electronic devices while driving, parents need to have a long conversation with their teens however that conversation won't have much impact if the parent is just as guilty when it comes to use of electronic devices while driving.

For more information visit:

<http://alerts.nationalsafetycommission.com/2009/01/evidence-proves-that-cell-phone-use.php>

<http://www.distraction.gov/index.html>

Six Charged After Teen's Fatal Accident

Six people, including a 21-year-old Tarrytown, N.Y., man, were charged with providing alcohol to a minor after a lengthy investigation into an accident that killed a 16-year-old Ridgefield High School girl last summer, Ridgefield police said late Monday.

Source: <http://www.newstimes.com> ♦

Lessons Learned

This is an all too familiar scenario that happens on a regular basis; teens throwing a party, with or without their parent's knowledge, and a teen driving away to die in an alcohol or drug related crash.

In this case, not only was the 21 year old supplier of the alcohol arrested but so were the 16 and 17 year old hosts of the two parties this victim attended that night. Most teens throwing a party such as this never seem to stop and consider the possible consequences. It is even worse when an adult is involved, operating under the belief that they would rather have their teens drinking at home than out on the street.



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Most states have some form of “Social Host” laws that hold a host liable if they allowed a guest who was obviously intoxicated to leave a party without a designated driver or some other form of safe transportation. All states also have laws against supplying alcohol or drugs to a minor.

For information on laws in your state, you can visit the web site SocialHostLiability.org.

These young people were probably operating under the assumption that “it would never happen to them” or that there would be little or no legal ramifications if something did happen. Unfortunately, they were wrong.

Tips for Parents: Teens using cigarettes, alcohol less but smoking pot more

A survey of teens released this month by the National Institutes of Health titled “Monitoring the Future” showed some good news. Both the use of alcohol and tobacco has declined dramatically over previous years but the good news came along with some bad. The use of marijuana by teens has steadily risen over the past several years and daily marijuana use by high school seniors is now at a 30 year high.

The researchers suggested that the decline in the use of alcohol and tobacco are due to efforts to get out the word on the dangers of these drugs. Programs designed to show the dangers of alcohol and tobacco and limit their use by teens seems to be working.

While these programs have shown the dangers of alcohol and tobacco, the dangers of marijuana and other drugs such as spice and ecstasy are getting less attention and are on the rise.

Another problem arises when the subject of marijuana comes up that could lead to a lot of confusion among teens – the legalization of marijuana in some states. Legalized marijuana has gotten a lot of news attention over the past several years and there has been an explosive growth of medical marijuana “drug stores” in those states where it has been legalized. While the legalization is getting a lot of attention, there doesn’t seem to be so much attention given to why marijuana was legalized in those states and to the fact that medical marijuana must be prescribed by a doctor.

Marijuana, just like almost any other drug can have a beneficial use when it is used under strict medical conditions. The use of marijuana has been shown to relieve the symptoms of patients suffering from glaucoma and to patients undergoing chemo-therapy for cancer. In the case of cancer patients, the chemo-therapy destroys the patient’s appetite and they suffer from malnutrition just at the time they need their strength the most. The side effect that most marijuana users know as the “munchies” counteracts the appetite suppressing effect of the chemo-therapy drugs and allows a cancer patient to maintain a healthy weight.

In both of these cases, the patients must have a prescription from a doctor and, although it is doctor prescribed, they are still prohibited from driving a car or operating machinery while under the effects of the drug.



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All the teens may be hearing is that marijuana is legal in some states, so it must not be all that harmful. This is where parents need to start a dialogue with their teens and let them know why the drug has been legalized and that it is not your typical “street” type of marijuana. The prescription marijuana sold in these states is grown under carefully regulated conditions by state licensed growers.

In spite of the fact that marijuana may have been legalized in some states, it remains a dangerous, mind altering drug.

Just like alcohol, marijuana, can give its user a false sense of ability – the belief that the user is capable of performing acts such as driving when, in fact they are not.

Marijuana affects the users cognitive and color perception. Use of marijuana can slow a user’s reaction time by up to a full second. That second can mean the difference between life and death in an emergency.

There is some debate on whether or not marijuana is an addictive drug. The addiction may be more psychological than physical as it is with other drugs such as alcohol or cocaine but, real or not, there are people who have chosen marijuana over their careers and their children. It is difficult to conceive of marijuana as a harmless drug when people make those types of choices.

When discussing marijuana with your teen ask them; “If you were going on an airline trip, would it bother you if your pilot was stoned?” “If you needed surgery, would you want your surgeon to be stoned?” Put in that context, most teens would have to agree that they wouldn’t want their pilot or surgeon to be stoned. If that is the case, then marijuana must not be all that harmless.



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