

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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April a Deadly Month for Teen Drivers

Thus far, the month of April has been an extremely deadly month for teen drivers and their passengers. At least 69 teens have been killed in motor vehicle collisions and 76 have been injured; almost double the amount for March.

Source: [http:// http://www.google.com](http://http://www.google.com) ♦

Lessons Learned

A Google News search of teens killed this far in April revealed that at least sixty nine teens died in motor

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vehicle collisions during the month. This Google search of news reports is not a scientific survey and it doesn't turn up all of the news articles nor does it reflect the official statistics by state safety agencies. It is safe to assume that many more teens were killed than were reported in this search. This search didn't include teen passengers killed while an adult was at the wheel or teens that were killed in multiple car crashes where an adult was deemed to be at fault for causing the collision. It only included fatal crashes in which the teen driver was alleged to have been at fault.

In the 65 reported fatal crashes:

- 37 teen drivers were killed.
- 32 teen passengers were killed.
- 26 teen drivers were injured.
- 50 additional passengers were injured in fatal collisions.
- 1 teen in another vehicle was killed as the result of a teen's mistake.
- 33 people in other vehicles were injured.

- 63% of the crashes were single vehicle crashes.
- Seat belts were not used in 28% of the crashes.
- High speed was identified as the contributing factor in 27% of the crashes.
- 72% of the crashes involved loss of control of the vehicle by the teen driver (Loss of control is generally caused by a driver distraction in which the driver leaves the road and tries to over-correct, or when the driver is driving too fast for conditions and fails to negotiate a curve or turn, or a combination of high speed and a driver distraction.)
- 4 teen deaths were the result of street racing.
- 3 Teens died in ATV crashes
- Alcohol use was considered to be the contributing factor in 9% of the crashes.
- In 23 of the crashes, the vehicle was carrying 3 or more occupants.
- California led the other states with 9 teen deaths, followed by Texas with 6.

This unscientific article search shows that the statistics on teen driving hold up. Most teen driving crashes are single vehicle crashes and the main causes for teen driving deaths are speeding, driver distraction, lack of seat belt use, and use of alcohol or other drugs.

Graduated Licensing Laws (GDL) are designed to limit the number of passengers a teen driver can carry and to try to limit distractions by prohibiting use of cell phones. Violating traffic laws can result in suspension of a teen driver's license. Both parents and teens should know and understand their state's Graduated Licensing Laws and parents should enforce them.

It Doesn't Take a Car Crash To Kill Teens

A local teen was rushed to a Pittsburgh hospital early Thursday morning after being injured in a car-surfing accident. According to police, the 17-year-old female fell off the top of a car in a Cinemark movie theater parking lot.

Source: <http://www.wpxi.com> ♦

Lessons Learned

The incident above was one of several unusual incidents in which teens died or were severely injured.

This girl was one of at least two teens who were severely injured while "car surfing", attempting to stand or ride exposed on top of a vehicle in motion. This type of stunt results in many injuries and deaths each year.

Another teen boy was one of several riding in the trunk of a car when he was thrown out of the vehicle, suffering major injuries.

Another incident involved a teen girl who was engaged in horseplay with her boyfriend while



the vehicle was in motion. Authorities are unsure of what exactly happened but it is felt that the girl accidentally hit the door handle, opening the door. Not wearing a seat belt, she was thrown out of the vehicle and suffered traumatic brain injury.

Another 17 year old boy was trying to hold down a mattress in the back of a pickup truck traveling at approximately 35 to 40 mph. The airstream, both above and below the mattress, created a wing-like effect, lifting the mattress along with the boy into the air. The boy died due to massive brain trauma.

Teens tend to feel invincible but they aren't strong enough, agile enough, or quick witted enough to overcome the physical forces of nature. The laws of motion will win out every time.

Even inside the vehicle, if they aren't wearing a seat belt, they are asking for trouble. Quite a few of the teens who weren't wearing seat belts in crashes this month were killed or injured when they were ejected from the vehicle due to the forces of the crash.

Teens and adults need to be constantly reminded that there is no safe place on or in a vehicle except in a passenger seat securely buckled in with a seat belt.

Tips for Parents: GDL Laws and Proper Licensing

Two crashes during the past month point out the need for enforcing Graduated Drivers License (GDL) laws and for ensuring that your teen doesn't drive any type of vehicle other than that for which he or she is licensed.

The first crash involved a car loaded with six teenage boys driven by a 16 year old driver. The driver lost control and the car left the road and rolled several times before coming to a stop. Half of the passengers were not wearing seat belts and one teen was ejected from the vehicle. Fortunately, none of the boys received life threatening injuries; it is extremely rare for someone ejected from a vehicle to survive.

Illinois, where the crash occurred has a Graduated Drivers License Law which limits the number of passengers a 16 year old driver can carry to one non-family member under the age of 20. All occupants of the vehicle must wear seat belts.

The more passengers a teen carries, the greater the distractions and the need, especially for teen boys, to show off. All the ingredients for a tragic ending were present in this case. Luckily, there was no loss of life.

In another case, a 17 year old boy with a provisional license was driving a tractor trailer rig that had been converted to a family RV. For unknown reasons, he left the road and crashed into a ravine. There were 18 family members aboard and five were killed in the crash.

Normally, anyone driving a vehicle of that size would need to hold a commercial drivers license (CDL). In this case, since the vehicle was registered as an RV, he was apparently loop-holed in with the license he held. Regardless of that fact, Minnesota's GDL law required that all passengers be belted in; only 2 of the 18 vehicle occupants were wearing seat belts at the time of the crash.

GDL laws have been shown to be effective in saving lives and the teen death rate has gone down dramatically since they have gone into effect but they are only as good as their enforcement. If teens can get away with carrying more passengers than they are allowed or driving a vehicle for which they are not fully trained or licensed, tragedy could be the result.



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