

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## End Of Summer Especially Deadly For Teens

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

### Lessons Learned

A Google News search of teens killed thus far in September revealed that at least fifty five teens died in motor 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

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 End Of Summer Especially Deadly For Teens**
- 2 Designate a Texter**
- 3 Tips for Parents: What if you find out your teen is using drugs?**

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For Teens and their Parents



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 55 reported fatal crashes so far:

- 37 teen drivers were killed.
- 18 teen passengers were killed.
- 15 of the teen drivers were injured.
- 33 additional passengers were injured in fatal collisions.
- 3 occupants of other vehicles were killed
- 16 people in other vehicles were injured.
- 67% 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 35% of the crashes.



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- 73% 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.)
- 2 teens died in dirt bike crashes.
- 3 teens died in ATV crashes.
- 1 teen was killed and another critically injured while “Car surfing.”
- Alcohol use was considered to be the contributing factor in 4% of the crashes.
- In 11 of the crashes (20%), the vehicle was carrying 3 or more occupants.
- South Carolina led the nation with 5 deaths followed by Idaho with 4.
- The weekend of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> was the worst period with 12 crashes and 12 fatalities.

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.

## Designate a Texter

Taking a cue from anti-drunk driving campaigns, The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has announced a new program aimed at stopping distracted Driving.

Source: <http://www.stoptextsstopwrecks.org> ♦

## Lessons Learned

According to NHTSA’s newly created website <http://www.stoptextsstopwrecks.org>,

- Eighteen percent of fatal crashes reportedly involved the use of a cell phone as a distraction prior to the crash.
- Texting requires the driver to take his/her eyes off the road for an average of five seconds per text. At 55 mph, that means the driver is driving blind for more than the length of a football field; 404 feet to be precise.
- A texting driver is 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than a non-texting driver.

Among other recommendations, NHTSA suggests that drivers “**Designate a Texter.**” Allow a passenger to take over the duties of texting while the driver focuses his/her full attention on the road.

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## **Tips for Parents: What if you find out your teen is using drugs?**

Parents hate to think that their child could be using alcohol or drugs without their knowledge but, all too often, parents find out to their horror that that is indeed the case. Once they have made that discovery, parents are faced with a bewildering array of decisions and choices to try to put an end to the behavior. Unfortunately, there is no “one size fits all” solution to the problem because we are dealing with individuals whose motivations may be vastly different from those of the parent and other siblings.

Drastic measures that some parents consider include transferring the child to a new school to remove him or her from the “friends” that make up the environment that encourages drug use. That rarely works because the teen may be even more resentful and can easily spot the drug culture at the new school. A more effective method is controlling the teen’s contact with friends to ones that you know and trust.

Knowing and trusting your teen’s friends means also knowing their parents. Contact with other parents is important; especially if you know their teen has also been engaging in the same type of behavior. Be aware though that, rather than gaining an ally, you may get strong resistance from the other parents who are in denial that their little Billy or Susie could ever engage in that type of behavior. If that is the case, at least you have tried and can scratch that friend off of your teen’s trusted contact list.

As every parent of a teen knows, your teen thinks you are totally out of touch with the real world and “You just don’t understand!” Teens will often listen to a respected teacher or coach before they will listen to their parents. If that is the case with your child, ask for help from that respected teacher or coach. In today’s

environment, teachers are often afraid to speak up for fear of retribution from angry parents. However, if you give your permission for them to be brutally blunt, you will never find a stronger ally in this struggle.

Another weapon you have is your ability, as a parent of a minor, to go to the DMV and cancel his/her driver’s license. It may be a pain to lose the convenience of having the teen act as his or her own chauffeur but at least you have control and it is far preferable to having the state take away the license after a DUI charge or worse yet, a collision that seriously injures or kills your teen or someone else.

Let the teen know that trust is an easy thing to lose and almost impossible to get back once it is lost. If they get angry with you for not trusting them, they have only themselves to blame.

Other tools available from drug stores at a very reasonable cost are breathalyzers and home drug testing kits. Let the teen know that the freedom to go out with friends means random drug and alcohol tests when they come home.

Just like the Parent/Teen Driving Contract, a new “General Expected Behavior Contract can be crafted with the teen’s input and consent. If they have some ownership of the contract and know its provisions as well as the consequences for failure to meet the provisions they will be more willing to buy into it.

Once such a contract is created and agreed to, you as a parent have to make sure that you follow through on the consequences and don’t give in to the pleadings of the teen. Remember, in this struggle, you aren’t the teen’s friend; you are the one responsible for getting them as safely as possible to self-sufficient adulthood. Often, until the child grows up and has his/her own children, it is a thankless but absolutely necessary job.