

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## February Teen Death Rate Creeps Higher

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

### Lessons Learned

A Google News search of teens killed thus far in February revealed that at least 49 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 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.

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For Teens and their Parents



In the 43 reported fatal crashes reported thus far this month:

- 21 teen drivers were killed.
- 28 teen passengers were killed.
- 22 of the teen drivers were injured.
- 30 additional passengers were injured in fatal collisions.
- 3 occupants of other vehicles were killed.
- 13 people in other vehicles were injured.
- 67% of the crashes were single vehicle crashes.
- Seat belts were not used in 44% of the fatal crashes.
- High speed was identified as the contributing factor in 51% of the crashes.
- 88% 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.



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- Alcohol use was considered to be the contributing factor in 6% of the crashes.
- In 17 of the crashes (39%), the vehicle was carrying 3 or more occupants.
- California led the nation with 9 teen deaths followed by Texas with 6.
- February 11 was the deadliest single day with 5 teen deaths in two crashes.
- 25 of the deaths (49%) occurred on weekends.

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 GDL 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.

## Driving In Winter Weather

“Further investigation revealed that the Chevrolet was traveling east on Waugh Chapel Road approaching Brander Mill Boulevard when the vehicle failed to negotiate a curve in the roadway and began to rotate in a counterclockwise direction. The vehicle continued to rotate and as it crossed the double yellow pavement striping, ultimately striking the cement mixer, which was traveling west. Both vehicles continued toward the shoulder of the road, finally striking the guardrail. The female driver of the Chevrolet was ejected during the crash and sustained fatal injuries.

Preliminarily, there is evidence to suggest that wet and icy roads may have contributed to this crash.”

Source: <http://www.eyeonannapolis.net> ♦

## Lessons Learned

The article above concerns one of at least three teens who were killed after losing control of their vehicles on icy roads in February. While authorities stated that icy conditions may have “contributed” to this crash, all three of the fatal teen crashes shared one thing in common other than the snow or ice covered roads and that was speed.

In each of the snow related crashes, the driver failed to negotiate a curve and was sent spinning into on-coming traffic or off the road. Had those drivers properly adjusted their speed for conditions, they may have been able to avoid spinning out.

In snow and ice conditions, even the best of drivers can find themselves spinning out of control but the best of drivers know to travel slowly in icy conditions so that, if they do lose traction, the damage to their vehicles will be minimal. In the three crashes noted this month, once control was lost, the vehicles were traveling at such a speed that the collision forces were enough to cause tremendous damage.

At least one of the teen drivers committed an even graver error by not wearing a seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle. That teen might have survived the crash if seat belts had been used.

Spring is rapidly approaching but Mother Nature has a way of springing surprise snow storms at this time of year and teen drivers who may not have

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experienced snow in certain parts of the country could find themselves driving on snow or ice covered roads. Most state driving manuals offer the same advice for driving in snow and ice:

When driving in snow, slow your speed to half; when driving on ice, slow to a crawl. Start out slowly and test your brakes to see how well they will respond. When using the brakes, squeeze them gently and, if you feel your wheels start to lock and skid, let off of the brakes momentarily to try to regain traction.

Remember that bridges and overpasses freeze first. Even after the snow has melted, black ice can be a problem in low-lying and shady areas. Also remember that, as temperatures start to rise and snow turns to slush, the roads become even more slippery.

Above all else, the best way to protect yourself in any driving condition is to wear seat belts.

## **SEAT BELTS SAVE LIVES!**

### Tips For Parents: Teaching Your Teen To Be A Smart Passenger

February's crash report revealed that more teen passengers died in crashes with a teen at the wheel than drivers. Twenty-one teen drivers were killed in February but that number was surpassed by the loss of twenty-eight passengers of teen drivers. Out of the twenty-four crashes in which a teen passenger died, only four of the drivers were killed.

Seventy-five percent of the crashes were single vehicle crashes where the teen driver lost control of the vehicle and went off the road. High speed was cited by authorities as the major factor in fifty percent of the crashes. According to the news reports, use of alcohol or other drugs was a factor in only thirteen percent of the crashes.

Whenever a teen driver carries passengers, the chance of a collision rises significantly. In seventy-one percent

of the February crashes in which a teen passenger died, the car was carrying three or more teen passengers.

Teens are easily distracted and the more teen passengers there are, the greater the chance of a driver distraction. Teen drivers also tend to show off for their friends and take risks that put everyone in the vehicle in jeopardy.

Statistics also show that, when teens are riding as passengers with other teens, seat belt use goes down. That holds true even when the teen habitually wears a seat belt when he or she is the driver. In sixty-seven percent of the February crashes in which a teen passenger died, seat belts weren't used. Quite a few of those passengers were ejected from the vehicle at a high rate of speed.

Teens need to be taught that it is OK to refuse a ride when they don't feel right about the driver. They also need to understand that it is OK for them to tell the driver to stop and get out of the vehicle if the driver is exhibiting unsafe driving behavior. No one should ever ride as a passenger in a vehicle when the driver has been drinking; no matter how small the amount of alcohol.

To save face among their peers, parents and teens can agree on a "safe word." A safe word is a code word or phrase that lets the parent know the teen doesn't feel safe and needs to be rescued; no matter the time or distance involved.

You and your teen can concoct a cover story in advance that allows you to take the blame and allows the teen to save face among his or her peers. It is better to be safe than sorry.

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