

SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

July 2022



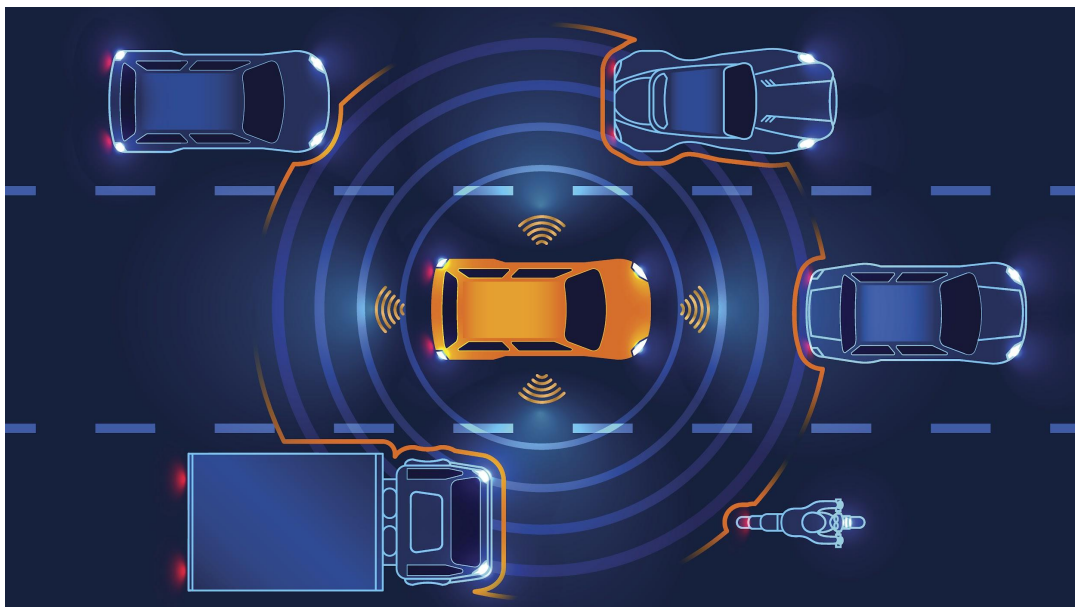
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Driving Assistance Underperforms

For those who think the age of the fully autonomous or self-driving car is here, don't get too excited. It seems that there is still a lot more work to do before vehicles are fully autonomous.

AAA tested three different vehicle models to determine their safety performance when sharing the road with other vehicles. The vehicles tested were:

- 2021 Subaru Forester with "EyeSight®"
- 2021 Hyundai Santa Fe with "Highway Driving Assist"
- 2020 Tesla Model 3 with "Autopilot"



The three vehicle types are advertised to have active driving assistance systems that operate to keep a vehicle within a lane and to maintain distance and brake to avoid vehicles in the same lane ahead. None of the vehicles are considered to be fully autonomous and all require active driver input.

The vehicles were tested on a test track with A full-size foam rubber vehicle and a man-sized dummy on a bicycle. All three vehicles performed well when the dummy bike and vehicle were traveling ahead in the same direction. However, problems arose when encountering oncoming or cross-road traffic entering the lane.

All three vehicles collided head-on with the dummy vehicle when it partially entered the lane ahead from the opposite direction. Only one vehicle significantly reduced speed before the collision.

Thirty three percent of the time, collisions occurred when the dummy bicyclist crossed the lane ahead.

AAA testing in previous years also found that rain and snow were an impairment to the driver-assist systems.

While the driver-assist systems do improve safety to an extent, there can be a tendency for drivers to become too reliant on the systems and become complacent. There is no such thing as a fully autonomous system yet and drivers still need to remain alert and focused on the road ahead. These systems should only be a back-up for a driver.



The Dangers of Binge Drinking

After months in the hospital, a University of Missouri fraternity pledge has returned home, blind, and unable to walk or communicate. The severe damage to his brain is the result of alcohol poisoning that he suffered last October during a fraternity pledge event where a tube was put into his mouth and beer was poured down his throat.

The fraternity has since been shut down and his fraternity “brothers” are facing civil suits and criminal charges resulting from their actions.

Alcohol is a very dangerous drug and it’s important to understand how it works on the brain in order to prevent long-lasting harm or even death.

The body can process alcohol and filter it out through the liver but that takes time. Depending on a person’s body size, the liver takes approximately one hour to process the alcohol in one drink.

It’s also important to understand the alcohol content in that one drink. Whether you are drinking whiskey or beer, the alcohol is the same, only the amount changes. The following types of drinks contain roughly the same amount of alcohol;

- 12 oz beer
- 6 oz glass of wine
- 1.5 oz shot of liquor

Alcohol acts as a depressant to the central nervous system. Essentially it acts as an anesthetic on different areas of the brain.

The first area of the brain that is affected by alcohol is the area that controls judgment. If you make plans before you start drinking to limit the amount of alcohol you’re going to drink and to have a way to get home safely, chances are that you’ll probably stick with those choices. If, however, you don’t make those plans in advance and wait until after you’ve started drinking, your lack of judgment is probably going to lead you to make some poor choices.

If you drink at a rate that is faster than your body can process it, the next area of the brain that is put to sleep controls the voluntary muscles of the body. Your ability to walk and talk and even to see clearly will all be affected by that lack of muscle control.

If you have quickly consumed a large amount of alcohol, the third area of the brain that gets put to sleep controls the involuntary muscles. The involuntary muscles are those muscles that have to work all the time and they include the heart and the lungs. If you have consumed so much alcohol that those muscles shut down, this is known as alcohol poisoning and death is usually the result.

Before your teen heads out to summer parties or leaves for college in the fall, you need to make sure that they fully understand how this process works. It is too easy to give in to peer pressure and they have to make the decision ahead of time to avoid it.

