# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Unbelted Teen Killed in Rollover Crash

A 16-year-old Idaho teen was killed on March 26 when his vehicle rolled over and he was ejected. Police say the teen, who was not wearing a seat belt, overcorrected when his vehicle went off the left shoulder of the road.

*Source: KVTB.com*♦

## Lessons Learned

Wear your safety belt and shoulder harness properly. In a crash, you are far more likely to be killed if you are not wearing a safety belt. Wearing shoulder belts and lap belts make your chances of living through a crash twice as good. If you are involved in a crash, your seat belt will keep you from being thrown from your vehicle. If you are thrown from your vehicle in the crash, your risk of death is five times greater. Seat belts keep you from being thrown against others in the vehicle. Seat belts also keep you from being thrown against parts of your vehicle, such as the steering wheel or windshield. They keep the driver behind the wheel, where he or she can control the vehicle.

Wear a shoulder belt only with a lap belt. Wear your safety belt every time you get in your vehicle, not just for long trips or on high-speed highways. More than half of the crashes that cause injury or death happen at speeds less than 40 mph and within 25 miles from home.

Wearing seat belts dramatically increases the chances of survival during a rollover crash. In fatal crashes in 2004, 74 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected from the vehicle were killed.

When you are driving, things can happen very quickly. You may have only a fraction of a second to make the right move. Learn how to handle vehicle emergencies so you don't panic and overcorrect if you get into trouble.

Here's how to handle your right wheels being off the pavement.

- Take your foot off the gas pedal.
- Hold the wheel firmly and steer in a straight line.
- Brake lightly.
- Wait until the road is clear.
- Turn back on the pavement sharply at slow speed.

### Inside This Issue





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# Wet, Foggy Conditions Contribute to Crash that Kills Teen

A teen driver died after losing control of her vehicle on wet roads and in foggy weather. Police say the teen crossed the center line due to poor visibility caused by the fog, then skidded on the wet road when she tried to make a correction, hitting a tree on the driver's side.

*Source: ChestertonTribune.com*♦

# Lessons Learned

We cannot avoid environmental conditions when we drive. Sometimes, conditions are favorable: a clear day with good visibility. Other times, challenging environmental conditions such as rain, fog and wind exist.

Conditions that can greatly affect visibility are fog, haze, smoke and mist. Be especially careful of patches of fog in valleys and low-lying areas.

It is best not to drive in fog or smoke. If you must, slow down, turn on your low beam headlights, and be ready for a fast stop. Use windshield wipers in heavy fog. If the fog or smoke becomes so thick that you cannot see well enough to keep driving, pull off the road until conditions improve. Pull over as far to the right as possible, off the main travel portion of the roadway. Leave your parking lights on and activate your hazard lights.

If you must keep driving, drive slowly, but keep your vehicle moving. Be alert for slow-moving or stopped traffic. Check your rearview mirrors frequently for vehicles that are approaching quickly from the rear.

During rainy conditions, wet roads will increase stopping distance. Driving is more dangerous even when only a few drops of rain fall. Roads are most slippery just after it begins to rain because the rain mixes with oil dropped from cars onto the road, creating a very slick surface.

When you are driving in the rain, slow down. Driving too fast in the rain makes hydroplaning more likely. When a car hydroplanes, the tires ride on a thin film of water instead of on the road. When this happens, you can easily lose control and skid. The law requires the tread on tires to meet certain standards, but if the tread on your tires is worn, your vehicle is more likely to hydroplane. Your vehicle can hydroplane in as little as 1/16 of an inch of water. Besides slowing down, you can also reduce your chances of hydroplaning by making sure your tires have the right air pressure and good tread. If your vehicle hydroplanes, ease your foot off the gas and allow your vehicle to slow down until your tires gain traction with the road.

If you are approaching standing water, lift your foot off the gas pedal and check your rearview mirror for vehicles that may be following you too closely. Then follow these steps:

1. Slow down before hitting the water.
2. Turn on your windshield wipers.
3. Tap the brakes as you exit.

Use caution in checking outside mirrors. Rain can distort or obliterate images.

If the standing water is concentrated on one portion of the road and only one side of the vehicle goes through the water, the vehicle will pull in that direction. The force of the pull depends on the depth of the water and the speed of the vehicle.

Brakes often become wet after driving through deep water or in heavy rain. They may pull to one side or not hold at all. If this happens, allow your vehicle to slow down and gently push on the brake pedal until your brakes are working again.

Never drive through standing water if you do not know how deep it is. Also, do not drive through large bodies of standing water. This could affect brake performance and the vehicle's electrical system and could cause engine failure, resulting in costly repairs.

## Passenger Dies when Driver Runs Stop Sign

An 18-year-old woman died when she was thrown from the vehicle she was riding in when the 19-year-old driver ran a stop sign and another car struck the vehicle in the intersection. The 19-year-old driver escaped with minor injuries.

*Source: ColumbusDispatch.com*♦

## Lessons Learned

Speeding, tailgating, running red lights and/or stop signs, unsafe maneuvers such as driving on the shoulder and weaving in and out of traffic, and generally disregarding public or personal safety are all examples of aggressive driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration points out that it does not take long to find examples of aggressive driving on our roadways. Most of us see it every day - the road racer, the tailgater, the frequent lane changer, the stop sign runner.

The NHTSA has a test you can take to see if you have developed some habits that could be adding to the aggressive driving atmosphere. Record the number of "No" answers you give to the following questions.

Do you:

- Overtake other vehicles only on the left?
- Avoid blocking passing lanes?
- Yield to faster traffic by moving to the right?
- Keep to the right as much as possible on narrow streets and at intersections?
- Maintain appropriate distance when following other vehicles, bicyclists, motorcyclists, etc.?
- Provide appropriate distance when cutting in after passing vehicles?
- Use headlights in cloudy, rainy, and/or low light conditions?
- Yield to pedestrians?
- Come to a complete stop at stop signs, before turning right on red, etc.?
- Stop for red traffic lights?
- Approach intersections and pedestrians at slow speeds to show your intention and ability to stop?
- Follow right-of-way rules at four-way stops?
- Drive below posted speed limits when conditions warrant?
- Drive at slower speeds in construction zones?
- Maintain speeds appropriate for conditions?
- Use vehicle turn signals for turns and lane changes?
- Make eye contact and signal intentions where needed?
- Acknowledge intentions of others?
- Use your horn sparingly around pedestrians, at night, near hospitals, etc.?
- Avoid unnecessary use of high beam headlights?
- Yield and move to the right for emergency vehicles?
- Refrain from flashing headlights to signal a desire to pass?
- Drive larger vehicles, such as trucks, at posted speeds, in the proper lanes, using non-aggressive lane changing?
- Make slow, deliberate U-turns?
- Maintain proper speeds around roadway crashes?
- Avoid returning inappropriate gestures?
- Avoid challenging other drivers?
- Try to get out of the way of aggressive drivers?
- Refrain from momentarily using High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes to pass other vehicles?
- Focus on driving and avoid distracting activities (e.g. smoking, use of a cell phone, reading, shaving)?
- Avoid driving when drowsy?
- Avoid blocking the right-hand turn lane?
- Avoid taking more than one parking space?
- Avoid parking in a disabled space (if you are not disabled)?
- Avoid letting your vehicle's door hit the vehicle parked next to you?
- Avoid using your cellular telephone while driving?
- Avoid stopping in the road to talk with a pedestrian or other driver?
- Avoid inflicting loud music on neighboring cars?

Score Yourself: Add up the number of "No" answers:

- 1 - 3: Excellent
- 4 - 7: Good
- 8 - 11: Fair
- 12 (or more): Poor

# Georgia Teen Dies in Crash Due to Speeding

An 18-year-old Georgia woman died on March 18 after crashing her car into a tree and wall not far from her home. Police say the teen was driving at a high rate of speed.

*Source: Macon.com*♦

# Lessons Learned

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration considers a crash to be speeding-related if the driver was charged with a speeding-related offense or if an officer indicated that racing, driving too fast for conditions, or exceeding the posted speed limit was a contributing factor in the crash.

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. The economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is estimated by NHTSA to be $40.4 billion per year. In 2005, speeding was a contributing factor in 30 percent of all fatal crashes, and 13,113 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes.

Motor vehicle crashes cost society an estimated $7,300 per second. The total economic cost of crashes was estimated at $230.6 billion in 2000. In 2000, the cost of speeding-related crashes was estimated to be $40.4 billion — $76,865 per minute or $1,281 per second.

Speeding reduces a driver's ability to steer safely around curves or objects in the roadway, extends the distance necessary to stop a vehicle, and increases the distance a vehicle travels while the driver reacts to a dangerous situation.

For drivers involved in fatal crashes, young males are the most likely to be speeding. The relative proportion of speeding-related crashes to all crashes decreases with increasing driver age. In 2005, 38 percent of the male drivers age 15 to 20 who were involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash.

In 2005, 34 percent of all motorcyclists involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared to 22 percent for passenger car drivers, 18 percent for light-truck drivers, and 7 percent for large-truck drivers.

In 2005, only 49 percent of speeding passenger vehicle drivers under age 21 who were involved in fatal crashes were wearing safety belts at the time of the crash. In contrast, 67 percent of nonspeeding drivers in the same age group were restrained. For drivers age 21 and older, the percentage of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes who were using restraints at the time of the crash was 43 percent, but 72 percent of nonspeeding drivers in fatal crashes were restrained.

In 2005, 22 percent of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes had an invalid license at the time of the crash, compared with 11 percent of nonspeeding drivers.

Speeding was a factor in 28 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred on dry roads in 2005 and in 33 percent of those that occurred on wet roads. Speeding was a factor in 51 percent of the fatal crashes that occurred when there was snow or slush on the road and in 58 percent of those that occurred on icy roads.

Speeding was involved in over one-fourth (27%) of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones in 2005.

In 2005, 86 percent of speeding-related fatalities occurred on roads that were not Interstate highways.

Alcohol and speeding are clearly a deadly combination. Alcohol involvement is prevalent for drivers involved in speeding-related crashes. In 2005, 40 percent of the drivers with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher involved in fatal crashes were speeding, compared with only 14 percent of the drivers with a BAC of .00 g/dL involved in fatal crashes.

In 2005, 25 percent of the speeding drivers under age 21 who were involved in fatal crashes also had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher. In contrast, only 11 percent of the nonspeeding drivers under age 21 involved in fatal crashes in 2005 had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher.

For drivers between the ages of 21 and 24 who were involved in fatal crashes in 2005, 50 percent of speeding drivers had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher, compared with only 24 percent of nonspeeding drivers.

For both speeding and nonspeeding drivers involved in fatal crashes, the percentage of those who had been drinking, with a BAC of .01 g/dL or higher, at the time the crash occurred was higher at night than during the day. Between midnight and 3 a.m., 75 percent of speeding drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking.