Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Killed after Pulling in Front of Truck

An 18-year-old woman was killed when she made a left turn in front of an oncoming flatbed truck full of cinderblocks. The truck hit the teen's car and she was pronounced dead at the scene.

Source: TheRepublic.com♦

Lessons Learned

In 2005, 442,000 large trucks (gross vehicle weight rating greater than 10,000 pounds) were involved in traffic crashes in the United States: 4,932 were involved in fatal crashes. A total of 5,212 people died (12 percent of all the traffic fatalities reported in 2005) and an additional 114,000 were injured in those crashes.

Large trucks accounted for eight percent of all vehicles involved in fatal crashes and four percent of all vehicles involved in injury and property-damage-only crashes. One out of eight traffic fatalities in 2005 resulted from a collision involving a large truck.

Of the fatalities that resulted from crashes involving large trucks, 76 percent were occupants of another vehicle, 9 percent were non-occupants, and 15 percent were occupants of a large truck.

Of the injuries that resulted from crashes involving large trucks, 74 percent were occupants of another vehicle, 2 percent were non-occupants, and 24 percent were occupants of a large truck.

For safety's sake, you must understand all traffic laws, be courteous, abide by the rules of the road and drive responsibly. Large trucks include not only trucks but also any vehicle you have trouble seeing around, such as buses, vans, delivery trucks, motor homes, and some sport utility vehicles (SUV).

When you are driving in the vicinity of a large truck, stay out of the driver's blind spots. Remember that a large vehicle's blind spots may be different from the blind spots you have in your vehicle, which is smaller, shaped differently, and sits differently in relation to the road. The "No Zone" is the area around the vehicle that a driver can't see in her or his rearview or side mirrors. Many trucks have a sign that reads, "If you can't see my mirrors, I can't see you."

When you see this sign, make sure you can see the vehicle's mirrors. If you can't, speed up or slow down until you are out of the driver's No Zone. Otherwise, you might be involved in a crash if the driver of the large vehicle swerves or changes lanes. When passing a truck, first check to your front and rear, and move into the passing lane only if it is clear.

Inside This Issue

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Preteen Bicyclist Dies after Being Hit by Teen

A 12-year-old boy on a bike died when he was struck by a car driven by a 16-year-old girl. The teen was questioned by police, but has not been charged.

Source: ABCLocal.go.com♦

Lessons Learned

In the United States, 784 bicyclists were killed in crashes with motor vehicles in 2005. Bicycle deaths are most likely to occur in summer and fall. More deaths occur in urban areas (69%) than in rural areas. Thirty percent of deaths occur at intersections. The peak time is 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Deaths are most likely to occur on Fridays. Eighty-two percent of 2005 bicycle deaths were riders 16 years and older. Thirty percent had a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or greater.

As the driver of a larger vehicle, give a bicycle extra space whenever possible. Some riders may not be able to control their bicycles well and may suddenly get in your path. Other cyclists may swerve into your path for a variety of reasons that you may not be aware of, such as potholes, puddles, and storm drains. If you can predict a possible change of direction, you may be able to stop in time to avoid a crash. Be sure to give extra space to young riders, riders who seem inexperienced, riders who may have been drinking and older riders.

As you start to pass a bicyclist, approach slowly and try not to frighten the rider. Always start your pass well behind the bicycle. You should have at least three feet of clearance between your vehicle and the bicyclist.

Reduce your speed if the roadway is narrow. If you do not have this much space, wait for a gap in the oncoming traffic before you pass. Remember to signal to the traffic behind you to let them know you are changing lanes.

If you are unable to pass right away, make sure you don't follow the bicyclist too closely. If you are too close and the cyclist has to lay their bike down on the road in an emergency, you could run over the cyclist.

At night, use your low beam headlights. High beam headlights will temporarily blind a bicyclist.

When you parallel park, check for bicyclists before opening a street-side door.

When You Ride a Bicycle

Persons riding bicycles or mopeds on a roadway have the same rights (with certain exceptions) and duties as motor vehicle drivers and may be ticketed for traffic violations. Know and obey these laws:

- Bicyclists must obey all traffic controls and signals
- An adult bicyclist may carry a child in a backpack or sling, child seat or trailer designed to carry children
- You may not allow a passenger to remain in a child seat or carrier when you are not in immediate control of the bicycle
- Bicyclists and passengers should wear helmets approved by ANSI, Snell or other standard helmets
- A bicyclist on a sidewalk or crosswalk must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and must give an audible signal before passing
- Keep at least one hand on the handlebars
- On the roadway, check behind you before changing lanes
- If you are not traveling at the speed of other traffic, stay on the right-most portion of the roadway except when passing, making a left turn, avoiding hazards, or when a lane is too narrow for you and a vehicle to share it safely
- When operating a bicycle on a one-way street with two or more traffic lanes, you may ride as close to the left-hand edge of the roadway as practicable

Teen Sentenced to Jail for Fatal Car Crash

A 17-year-old boy was sentenced to one year in jail and five years' probation for negligent homicide in the death of a 12-year-old boy. Police believe the teen was driving 50 mph in a 25-mph zone.

Source: Boston.com♦

Lessons Learned

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. The economic cost to society of speeding-related crashes is estimated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to be 40.4 billion dollars 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.

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 involved in nearly one-third (27 percent) of the fatal crashes that occurred in construction/maintenance zones. Eighty-six percent of speeding-related fatalities occurred on roads that were not interstate highways.

In a 2002 survey, the NHTSA found that speeding is a pervasive behavior, with about three-quarters of drivers in the survey reporting they drove over the speed limit on all types of roads within the past month.

One way to look at speeding is in terms of benefits and risks. This means that the benefits and risks of speeding will be evaluated and the decision of whether or not to continue speeding will be made based on that comparison. On a piece of paper, create one column labeled "Benefits" and another labeled "Risks." In the Benefits column, list all the good things you can derive from speeding. For example, you might write down that the benefits of speeding are saving time, having fun, and reducing stress. Once you have completed your list of benefits, consider the Risks column. Write down all the bad things you could derive from speeding. Your list of risks might include tickets, poor gas mileage, higher insurance rates due to tickets or accidents, and greater risk of property damage, injury, and death if you are involved in an accident. After the list of risks is complete, compare your lists of benefits against your list of risks. Do any of the risks cancel out any of the benefits? For example, getting a ticket might cancel out saving time, and an accident might cancel out having fun. Are the benefits you receive from speeding worth the risks you face?

How much time do you think you save by speeding? The main reason people speed is they perceive they are saving time. They think they're going to get to their destination quicker if they go faster then everybody else on the road. What you should realize is you don't actually lose that much time by slowing down and, in the end, you might even save your life or save the life of someone else.

You should follow the "Basic Speed Rule." The basic speed rule simply states, "Do not go faster than is safe for conditions."

What does this mean? When you're driving on a road with a posted limit of 40 mph, that's the safest maximum speed you're allowed to drive during normal road conditions. What if conditions are not normal? For example, you're driving down the road and it begins to rain. It may not be safe to drive 40 mph, because the road may be slippery from the mixture of oil, dust and dirt accumulation with the rain water. The conditions dictate the speed that you should drive, regardless of what the speed limit may be.

The basic speed rule also applies on the highway. What if you just left a football stadium and there are 10,000 vehicles on the road in front of you. Is it okay to drive 55 mph? Of course not! You have all the vehicles in front of you and it wouldn't be safe.

If you who think you're a great driver weaving in and out of traffic me, me, me... Thinking that you're getting there so much faster - you're not. You're just making everybody else mad and driving unsafe.

The last few times you were late for an appointment and speeding didn't you catch every single red light? Next time, leave your house a little earlier and don't speed.

Think about the last time you took a long road trip. Do you remember seeing the same cars over and over again? You remember that little red car with the couple in it that you went speeding past. They seem to keep reappearing. You keep seeing the little red car don't you? You look out your window, and there is that couple in the little red car again.

Crash Kills Teen, Seriously Injures Passenger

An 18-year-old man, who was not wearing a seat belt, died when he was ejected from his vehicle in a high-speed crash. His 18-year-old passenger, who was wearing a seat belt, sustained serious injuries.

Source: MyFoxColorado.com♦

Lessons Learned

As the driver of your vehicle, you are responsible for ensuring that all safety equipment is used in accordance with the law.

In a crash, you are far more likely to be killed if you are not wearing a safety belt. Research has found that use of lap/shoulder belts reduces the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger-car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, safety belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and moderate-to-critical injury by 65 percent. In 2005, the use of safety belts saved 15,632 lives. If all occupants of passenger vehicles wore their safety belts, an additional 5,328 lives could have been saved in 2005.

If you are involved in a crash, your seat belt will keep you from being thrown from your vehicle. In fatal crashes in 2005, 75 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were totally ejected from the vehicle were killed.

In 2005 in the US, there were 361 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities among children under 4 years of age. Of the 344 fatalities in this age group for which restraint use was known, 110 (32%) were unrestrained.

Research on the effectiveness of child safety seats has found them to reduce fatal injury by 71 percent for infants (less than one year old) and by 54 percent for toddlers (1-4 years old) in passenger cars. In light trucks, use of child safety seats reduces fatal injury by 58 percent for infants and by 59 percent for toddlers.

Among children under 5 years old, an estimated 420 lives were saved in 2005 by child restraint use. At 100 percent child safety seat use for children under 5, an estimated additional 98 lives could have been saved.

The best child seat is the one that:

- Fits your child
- Fits your vehicle
- You will use correctly every time

Infants should ride in a rear facing child safety seat until age one and at least 20 pounds:

- Harness straps should be at or below the infant's shoulders.
- Harness straps should fit snugly. The straps should lie in a relatively straight line without sagging.
- The harness chest clip should be placed at the infant's armpit level. This keeps the harness straps positioned properly.
- Infants weighing 20 pounds or more before age one should ride rear facing in a convertible child safety seat rated for heavier infants (some convertible seats are rated up to 30-35 pounds rear facing).

Children over one year and at least 20 pounds may ride in a forward-facing child safety seat in the back seat. Children should ride in a safety seat with full harness until they weigh about 40 pounds.

- Harness straps should be at or above child's shoulders.
- Harness straps should be threaded through the top slots, in most cases.
- Harness should be snug. Straps should lie in a relatively straight line without sagging.
- Harness chest clip should be at the child's armpit level, which helps keep the harness straps positioned properly on the child's shoulders.

All children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9" tall.

Position the child safety seat in the middle of the back seat. Child safety seats must be properly installed to be effective. Read the instruction manual for the child restraint system and your vehicle carefully.

All infant carriers and car seats must be crash-tested and approved by the U.S. Government. Children should be secured in the rear seat. Never secure a child in the front passenger side, especially if your vehicle has an airbag.