

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Killed in Single-Vehicle Crash

A 19-year-old man was killed in a single-vehicle crash in which his car ran off the road and rolled up to four times. The man was not wearing his safety belt and was thrown more than 20 feet from his car.

Source: *KWSO.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Motor vehicle travel is the primary means of transportation in the United States, providing an unprecedented degree of mobility. Yet for all its advantages, deaths and injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for persons of every age from 3 to 33 years old (based on 2003 data). Traffic fatalities account for more than 90 percent of transportation-related fatalities.

In 2005, the fatality rate was 1.47 persons killed on the roads for every 100 million miles driven. The 1995 rate was 1.73 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.

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An 82% safety belt use rate nationwide, combined with a reduction in the rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes, contributed to this lower fatality rate. However, much remains to be done. The economic cost nationwide of motor vehicle crashes in 2000 was more than 230.6 billion dollars.

In 24 of the states with belt use laws in 2005, the law specified secondary enforcement. That is, police officers are permitted to write a citation only after a vehicle is stopped for some other traffic infraction.

As of December 2005, 49 states and the District of Columbia had belt use laws in effect. The laws differ from state to state, according to the type and age of the vehicle, occupant seating position, etc.

Research has found that lap/shoulder safety belts, when used, reduce 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.

Ejection from the vehicle is one of the most injurious events that can happen to a person in a crash. In fatal crashes in 2005, 75% of passenger car occupants who were totally ejected from the vehicle were killed. Safety belts are effective in preventing total ejections. Only 1% of the occupants reported to have been using restraints were totally ejected, compared with 30% of the unrestrained occupants. Whether you are going twenty miles per hour or seventy miles per hour, you are a lot better off wearing your safety belt.

Five Teens Injured When Car Flips

Five teenagers were injured when the car they were riding in flipped over when a rear tire blew out. Four teens were wearing seat belts and received only minor injuries, while a fifth teen, who was not wearing a safety belt, was in critical condition.

Source: WGRZ.com ♦

Lessons Learned

When you are driving, things can happen very quickly. You may only have a fraction of a second to make the right move. Here are some guidelines for handling emergencies.

When a front tire blows out, the vehicle pulls strongly in the direction of the deflated tire. You must steer firmly against the pull of the vehicle to keep it on its intended path. A left front tire blowout is especially dangerous, since the vehicle may pull left toward the lane of oncoming traffic.

When a rear tire blows out, the back of the car can fishtail. Handle a rear blowout like a skid. Grip the steering wheel firmly and ease up on the accelerator. Avoid braking. Steer the vehicle in the direction you want the front end to go and coast into a safe location.

If you are going to change a tire, check the owner's manual for the correct procedure. A tire change should always be performed off the traveled portion of the highway.

If your brakes fail, pump the brake pedal rapidly several times. You may be able to work up enough pressure to stop the car. If this does not work, shift into the next lower gear. As the car begins to slow down, shift down again. To slow down further, apply the parking brake. You may use your left foot on the parking brake (remember to hold the release button off). Keep in mind that the parking brake is a separate braking system and brakes only the two rear wheels.

When brakes are overused, such as when driving downhill or with your foot riding on the pedal, they can overheat. The best solution for overheated brakes is to stop and let them cool off. Pull off of the highway to a safe place.

Make sure there are no objects on the floor, such as a wadded floor mat or drink can, that could keep you from being able to press the brake pedal down. It is not safe to try to move an object from under the brake

pedal while you are driving. Remember to release the parking brake if you are going to push or tow your vehicle.

Different vehicles have different braking systems. It is important to read your owner's manual so you will know exactly what kind of brakes your vehicle has, so you will know how to react in emergencies.

If your vehicle breaks down, park where the disabled vehicle can be seen for 200 feet in each direction, if possible. Try to safely park the vehicle with all four wheels off the traveled portion of the roadway. Place your car in park if you have an automatic transmission. If your car is equipped with a manual transmission, put your car in gear. Engage the parking brake and turn on your emergency flashers. Tell all passengers to exit the vehicle on the side away from traffic. Raise the hood and tie a white cloth to your left door handle or radio antenna. It is safer to stay with your car than to go for help.

Most vehicle fires start in the engine compartment. Quickly steer the vehicle out of traffic and off the roadway to a safe open area. Stay away from buildings and service stations. Turn off the ignition. Tell all passengers to exit the vehicle and move a safe distance from the vehicle. If the fire is small and you have a portable extinguisher, you may attempt to extinguish the fire. Do not raise the hood if the fire is in the engine compartment, as air will cause it to flare up. Never apply water to a gasoline fire. If you cannot control the fire, move a safe distance away from the vehicle due to the possible presence of toxic fumes and/or potential explosion. Make sure someone has called the fire department (911).



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Teen Arrested, Charged in Fatal Car Crash

An 18-year-old man was arrested and charged with negligent homicide with a motor vehicle, reckless driving, driving the wrong way on a divided highway and traveling unreasonably fast. The 2007 crash, which occurred when the teen lost control in rainy conditions, killed an 18-year-old passenger in another vehicle.

Source: ZWire.com ♦

Lessons Learned

We drive in environmental conditions each time we make a trip. Understanding better how to handle changing conditions will make the trip more enjoyable and safer.

Driving in the rain is a hazard we must consider. When the roads are wet, stopping distance is increased. When braking, friction between your tires and the surface of the roadway affects your stopping distance. Wet roads have less friction and increase the distance it takes you to stop. Also, driving through water may cause hydroplaning. The tread on a tire prevents hydroplaning which is one reason the law requires tire treads to meet certain standards. As little as 1/16 of one inch of water can cause hydroplaning.

Hydroplaning occurs when your tires ride on a thin layer of water and do not touch the road. When the car is riding on a film of water, there is no friction between your tires and the road. Hydroplaning also affects your ability to steer and brake.

Do not drive through large bodies of standing water, which can affect brake performance and the vehicle's electrical system and can cause engine failure, which could result in costly repairs. 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 often pull in that direction. The force of the pull is dependent on the depth of the water and the speed of the vehicle.

As you approach standing water, lift your foot off the gas pedal and check your rearview mirror for vehicles that are following you too closely.

Remember:

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

4. Use caution when checking the outside mirrors. Rain can distort or obliterate images.

5. NEVER drive through standing water if you do not know how deep it is.

Heavy rain reduces your ability to see and be seen. In daytime turn on your windshield wipers, low beam headlights and, if needed, your windshield defroster. Heavy rain at night can almost blind you. Driving at the speed limit under those conditions is too fast. You should reduce your speed limit under those circumstances.

Use your low beam headlights in bad weather. Use of your high beams in heavy rain or fog will reflect the light back into your eyes.

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors in crashes. In 2005, speeding was a contributing factor in thirty percent of all fatal crashes, and 13,113 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes. Speeding affects the way a driver handles a vehicle because it prevents the driver from being able to control the vehicle around curves and bends. It increases braking distance. It also increases the distance that the vehicle travels before the driver can react to a dangerous situation.

As you drive, you judge speed, time, space, distance, traction and visibility. You make judgments about your own driving performance as well as the actions and performance of other drivers.

Always be prepared to adjust your speed for varying conditions and situations. Different traffic, roadway, and weather conditions can change the amount of time and space needed for slowing down and for braking control.

Any decision you make will be influenced by your own speed and the speed of other vehicles. Many drivers think that slowing down is the only way to avoid a conflict, but it is not. A quick maneuver may also be required.

Executing the decision to accelerate means you have judged the speed and use of space by others. You might accelerate to get out of another driver's way or to avoid an obstruction in the roadway.

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your DMV Exam
the first time?

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at
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Teen Dies When Car Crashes Into House

An 18-year-old man died from multiple injuries after he crashed his car into a house. Authorities say that alcohol was a major factor in the crash.

Source: *IndyStar.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Drinking alcoholic beverages and other drug use is widely accepted in our society. Advertisers often portray drinking as glamorous and sophisticated. Yet the abuse of drugs, including alcohol, is costly. It takes its toll in broken relationships, poor health, wasted lives and sometimes death.

This problem is greatly compounded when someone who drinks alcohol or uses other drugs also drives. A great number of collisions involve drivers who use alcohol and/or other drugs.

All states now enforce a minimum drinking age of 21. Nevertheless, alcohol-related crashes are still a top safety problem.

A driver affected by alcohol has a decreased ability to reason clearly and to make sound judgments. However, the driver may feel as though thinking and judging abilities are sharper and quicker than usual. Some people have a false sense of confidence after they have a drink or two. For example, some people think they can dance or even play pool better after a few drinks. There is nothing a person can do better after having a drink than she or he could do before having the drink. Drinking does not increase your ability to do anything better than you could before. Allow plenty of time to get to your destination safely.

In addition, alcohol quickly diminishes the ability to concentrate. A decrease in the ability to concentrate greatly increases a driver's level of risk. A person's driving ability can be reduced after only one drink. A person's driving ability decreases as the amount of alcohol in a person's body increases. An alcohol-impaired driver is less apt to interpret correctly what he or she sees.

Alcohol also weakens a driver's inhibitions, which are the inner forces of one's personality that hold back or restrain one's impulsive behavior. A driver's inhibitions weaken as the alcohol content in the body increases. The person who is drinking may drive too fast, take needless risks or even drive into emergency situations without knowing or even caring what's happening.

As more alcohol enters the bloodstream, the area of the brain that controls muscular movements and body control begins to slow down. Even after the driver recognizes danger, the brain takes longer than normal to process the information and react to the danger. Messages the brain sends to different parts of the body might become confused.

The muscular reactions of a driver who has been drinking can become slow and clumsy. Steering and braking movements can become uncoordinated. The driver might over-steer, brake late or not brake at all. The driver might not be able to negotiate turns properly and safely. Such actions cause drinking drivers to be involved in serious crashes.

Alcohol affects a driver's ability to see clearly. Night vision, peripheral vision, color vision, and depth perception are all impaired. Visual acuity, sharpness of vision, and peripheral vision are also reduced.

Alcohol also affects the reflex action of the eyes. At night, this impairment can be critical. As the headlights of oncoming vehicles come closer, the pupils of the eyes normally become smaller to shut out excess light. This reflex keeps the driver from being blinded by the glare of headlights. When the lights have passed, the pupils enlarge again to let in all available light.

But after only a few drinks, this reflex action is impaired. The pupils do not become small rapidly as bright lights approach, and they are slow to open after bright lights pass. As a result, the driver can be blinded temporarily and may continue to have blurred vision for some time after meeting each vehicle. For example, if a drinking driver is traveling 70 miles per hour and it takes three seconds for her or his pupils to return to normal, the person has driven over the length of a football field (100 yards) without being able to see.

Peripheral vision is also impaired by alcohol. When peripheral vision is narrowed, a driver must turn and look to the sides for potential problems. After a few drinks, though, drivers are usually not aware of restricted side vision. Therefore, they do not make the effort to turn and look to the sides. They are creating a hazard.

Once judgment and reasoning are affected, a person's actions and behavior change. Just one drink can affect a person's behavior. The same amount of alcohol does not affect all people the same way. Alcohol does not even affect one person the same way in all situations.