

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Teen Charged for Fatal Crash

The teen who was seated behind the wheel when her car skidded into a corn field killing one of her passengers will now face charges in connection with the crash.

Prosecutors say the 17-year-old was high on marijuana at the time of the crash that killed a 16-year-old passenger.

The driver is being charged with operating a vehicle causing death with a controlled substance and one count of reckless homicide.

Source: *Wishtv.com* ♦

## Lessons Learned

With all the hype over medical marijuana, many teens are not getting the full picture on the danger that marijuana poses and the long term effects. Many of which are still unknown.

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For Teens and their Parents



The probability of death, disfigurement, or debilitating injury grows with any drug in your system, whether legal or illegal. Drugs alter our bodies and have side effects that have to be considered before you get behind the wheel.

**Some common affects of marijuana on the body include:**

- Increased heart rate, insomnia, mood swings.
- Associated respiratory problems including sinusitis, bronchitis, coughing, and lung cancer.
- Lack of coordination, impaired speech, difficulty with focus, learning and memory.

The studies are on going with many studies showing a strong relation between marijuana and both mental health disorders and testicular cancer.

Marijuana in dangerous alone, but when combined with driving, marijuana effects the skills necessary to be a safe driver including:

- Marijuana affects a driver's **alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time.** People who use marijuana and drive display the same lack of coordination on standard "drunk driver" tests as people who have had too much alcohol.
- Marijuana, like other drugs and alcohol, can make it **harder** for a driver to **judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road.** For example, a driver who has smoked marijuana may have trouble judging how long it will take his car to slow down when he hits the brakes, and may struggle to coordinate steering and braking.
- The effects of marijuana on driving can **last up to**

**24 hours.** An accident that happens today could be the result of someone's choice to use marijuana at a party last night.

- About one in six high school seniors in the United States has driven **under the influence** of marijuana, but teen drivers seem unconcerned about the danger that comes with getting behind the wheel after smoking pot. Forty-one percent of teens polled by Students Against Destructive Decisions/Liberty Mutual said they were not worried about driving after using drugs.

Source: NIDA♦

Check with anyone that you are planning to catch a ride with and verify that are and have been alcohol and drug free. If not, call a friend, family member or a cab to pick you up.

Driving under the influence is dangerous, can result in a DUI and a life time of regret. Is it worth the risk?

## Teen in Deadly Crash Admits to DUI, Manslaughter

A 16-year-old pleaded guilty to aggravated involuntary manslaughter and drunken driving in the death of his teammate.

The juvenile was driving with his friend when the vehicle swerved off the road and hit a tree. The passenger died at the scene.

Police have said the case involved Four Loko, alcoholic energy drink. The beverages, which are becoming more common in underage drinking cases, look similar to nonalcoholic energy drinks.

Source: Pilotonline.com♦

## Lessons Learned

In the last several years, energy drinks have become the norm. Many people drink them to keep up with school, activities, work and to compensate for lack of sleep/rest. The theory is that you have to go, go, go, so that you can do, do, do.

But large amounts of caffeine do not come without side effects. Some of which include:

- Nervousness and poor concentration
- Impulsiveness and increased heart rate
- Irritability

These side effects increase the risk of danger when combined with driving.

Recently, several drink manufactures have created a product that combines the energy drink with alcohol. The containers look attractive and to the unknowing eye could easily mistake the beverage for an energy drink. Doctors, hospitals, police, and government officials and agencies are stepping up efforts to warn the public and to force changes in packaging, warnings and content.

Four Loko is said to contain the alcohol equivalent of three beers and the caffeine of one cup of coffee plus a Red Bull. The caffeine buzz delays the ability to feel the effect of the alcohol. Before the drinker is aware, they have consumed three beers at once and on a caffeine high.

The University of Florida recently conducted a study published in the journal Addictive Behaviors. Combining alcohol and energy proved to be a dangerous mix. The study found that of the patrons exiting bars, those who drank energy drinks mixed with alcohol were three times at risk of leaving a bar highly intoxicated and were four times more likely to intend to drive after drinking than bar patrons who drank alcohol only.

*"There's a very common misconception that if you drink caffeine with an alcoholic beverage the stimulant effect of the caffeine counteracts the depressant effect of the alcohol and that is not true,"* said study co-author Bruce Goldberger a professor and director of toxicology in the UF College of Medicine. *"We know that caffeine aggravates the degree of intoxication, which can lead to risky behaviors."*

When the effects wear off, you have double trouble, both caffeine and an alcohol crash.

Steer clear and don't let yourself, your friends or your family be fooled to the dangers of these drinks.

**Ready to get your Learners Permit?**



Take the Drug & Alcohol Course at  
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## Tips for Parents: Driver's Ed is Not a One Shot Deal

From the ages of 14 to 19, parents need to approach driver training as driver continuing education. Aspects of continuing education include: safety awareness, prevention education, introductory teaching, skill development, intermediate education, additional driving exposure and defensive driving education. The Governor's Highway Safety Administration (GHSA) and many individual states are aware of the importance of continuing driver education. As parents, it is time that we change our attitudes and recognizes the value this type of training provides.

By the time a soon-to-be driver is 14, they realize that it won't be long before they are behind the wheel. They become more aware of how you, your family members and other adults they travel with drive on the roads. They notice when you speed, try to multi-task, weave in and out of traffic, try to beat the red light and fuss about other drivers.

From this point, driver training has begun. If you haven't already started being a positive role model, the time has come to do so. This is a good time to:

- Brush up on the state's driving manual
- Discuss the precautions you take when deciding what time to leave, routes to go and lanes to travel in and how those precautions change based on circumstances
- Discuss current driving related articles in the news and prevention strategies

Prior to applying for your learner's permit, Florida law requires completion of the [Drug and Alcohol Class](#), which is a 4 hour course that focuses on prevention. Two-thirds of the curriculum generally addresses the dangers of drugs and alcohol and how deadly they become when combined with driving. The remainder of the curriculum addresses:

- Following distances
- Stopping distances
- Special vehicles
- Different aspects of the driving environment

It can be done in a classroom setting with an instructor or online at their leisure.

At this point, your teen hasn't even started the vehicle and quite a bit of education has already begun. This is a great time to create a [Parent-Teen Driving Contract](#), which will establish the boundaries, responsibilities and privileges of driving during their teen years. Also keep a driving log; to keep track of the amount, type and time of day that driver training was conducted.

Once the new driver has passed the road signs, regulations and eye tests, they will be issued a Learners Permit from the Division of Motor Vehicles. As a parent, you can now begin some introductory teaching:

- Show them the equipment, gauges and their functions on

the interior and exterior of the vehicle.

- Begin very simple skill development regarding pre-trip inspections, starting, stopping and parking.

The next step is to move into intermediate education and intermediate skills. You may want your teen to take a driver's education class or practice with an instructor. If you plan to take on the instruction yourself, it should be during this stage that you dedicate time (*most states require 50 hours supervised*) exposing them to highways, specific weather conditions and driver safety practices such as how to properly use the vehicle mirrors.

Practicing these intermediate driving skills help the new driver develop an adequate understanding of the vehicle and the skills to maneuver it with confidence. This is the time to discuss what it means to be a safe driver. Some topics to consider:

- What type of driving behaviors do safe drivers demonstrate?
- What type of attitudes do other drivers bring behind the wheel?
- How should a safe driver respond to harried, angry, or inattentive drivers?
- How important is being rested to making safe driving decisions?

As you move into the next stage of driving, your teen driver should demonstrate control of the vehicle. You should feel confident in their judgment and how they handle most driving situations. Focus on refining their skills by exposing them to complicated driving scenarios and employing defensive driving strategies such as:

- How to handle multiple hazards
- Identifying hazards with the greatest priority
- Which escape routes are available
- Complex right of way situations

Walk through vehicle emergencies, not only handling their vehicle, but also how to respond to another vehicle experiencing an emergency such as a blown tire.

Enroll your teen in a defensive driving class either right before they get their license or soon afterwards. While they may know how to drive, they haven't been ready to fully understand defensive driving techniques for themselves. Don't wait until something happens that requires them to take a class. Because teenage drivers are most at risk of a crash during their first year of licensure, there are supplemental classes they can take.

During that first year, it is important to phase in how much access to the vehicle they have, the time and under what conditions they drive, and the number of passengers, if any allowed.

Driving is such an important step in a teen's development, but it can also be very dangerous. It is up to the parents to establish and enforce a strong graduated licensing system. Remember that driver education is ongoing over the teenage years.

**Driver education is continuing education.**