

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Single Car Crashes Dominate in April

Source: [http:// http://www.google.com](http://http://www.google.com) ♦

Lessons Learned

A Google News search of teens killed thus far in April revealed that at least 46 teens died in motor vehicle collisions during the month. This Google search of news reports is not a scientific survey and it doesn't turn up all of the news articles nor does it reflect the official statistics by state safety agencies. It is safe to assume that many more teens were killed than were reported in this search. This search didn't include teen passengers killed while an adult was at the wheel or teens that were killed in multiple car crashes where an adult was deemed to be at fault for causing the collision. It only included fatal crashes in which the teen driver was alleged to have been at fault.

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For Teens and their Parents



In the 45 reported fatal crashes reported thus far this month:

- 30 teen drivers were killed.
- 16 teen passengers were killed.
- 15 of the teen drivers were injured.
- 22 additional passengers were injured in fatal collisions.
- 2 occupants of other vehicles were killed.
- 8 people in other vehicles were injured.
- 73% of the crashes were single vehicle crashes.
- Seat belts were not used in 31% of the fatal crashes.
- High speed was identified as the contributing factor in 31% of the crashes.
- 87% of the crashes involved loss of control of the vehicle by the teen driver. (Loss of control is generally caused by a driver distraction in which the driver leaves the road and tries to over-correct, or when the driver is driving too fast for conditions and fails to negotiate a curve or turn, or a combination of high speed and a driver distraction.)

- Alcohol use was considered to be the contributing factor in 9% of the crashes.
- In 12 of the crashes (26%), the vehicle was carrying 3 or more occupants.
- Texas led the nation with 5 teen deaths followed by North Carolina with 4.
- April 6th and 21st were the deadliest days with 6 teen deaths on each of those days.
- 24 of the deaths (59%) occurred on weekends.
- 31% of the deaths occurred at night.
- 2 of the deaths were on All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs).
- 2 of the deaths were on motorcycles.

This unscientific article search shows that the statistics on teen driving hold up. Most teen driving crashes are single vehicle crashes and the main causes for teen driving deaths are speeding, driver distraction, lack of seat belt use, and use of alcohol or other drugs. Graduated Licensing Laws (GDL) are designed to limit the number of passengers a teen driver can carry and to try to limit distractions by prohibiting use of cell phones. Violating GDL laws can result in suspension of a teen driver's license. Both parents and teens should know and understand their state's Graduated Licensing Laws and parents should enforce them.

Teens Make Poor Choices

"A California teen was charged with seven felony charges of driving under the influence causing death or substantial injury in the early March 30 wreck that killed five Southern California family members and injured two others.

Source: <http://abcnews.go.com> ♦

A pickup truck driven by 44-year-old Deputy Douglas Hanna was responding to an emergency when another pickup driven by a 17-year-old boy failed to stop at a stop sign, and crashed into Hanna's truck, killing the deputy.

Source: <http://www.newson6.com> ♦

Lessons Learned

We have discussed before the fact that there is rarely such a thing as a traffic "accident." Accidents are events over which one has no control. Except for rare occasions, motor vehicles crashes are caused when one or more drivers make a poor, sometimes deadly choice that leads to a crash. Two teens over the past month made especially poor choices.

In the case of the California teen, he had escaped earlier in the month from a juvenile drug treatment facility and teamed up with a 23-year-old friend. Both had been drinking when he drove onto Interstate 15 near Las Vegas where he rear-ended a van carrying three brothers and four other family members. The van was sent careening off the road, killing five of the family members and severely injuring two others (these deaths weren't included in the monthly figures above because the crash happened in the month of March).

The 18-year-old teen now faces seven counts of driving under the influence causing death or substantial injury. He is being held on \$3.5 million bail in isolated protective custody at the Clark County NV jail.

In the case of the Oklahoma teen, he was driving on a rural Oklahoma road and, as so many teens do, probably figured that nothing could go wrong when he ran a stop sign and collided with a vehicle being driven by a deputy sheriff. The force of the impact

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caused the deputy's vehicle to roll several times and, even though he was wearing a seat belt, he was partially ejected from the vehicle as it rolled over. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Teens rarely ever consider the consequences of their actions and, even though these teens weren't killed, their life, as they knew it, is now over.

Tips For Parents: Texting Studies Show Problems

(Do as we say not as we do!)

Several studies conducted recently show that the word about the dangers of texting and driving is getting out but many aren't listening and surprisingly, it's not just the teens who continue to text but adults as well.

The US division of Bridgestone Tire conducted a survey of teens aged 16 to 21 and it shows that peer pressure against texting and driving is having a result but, when the teens are alone in the car, they still continue to text and drive.

According to the Bridgestone survey:

- 71% believe reading received emails while driving is unacceptable but 45% admit to doing it.
- 80% believe sending texts and emails while driving is unacceptable but 37% say they do it.
- Only 32% of teens admit to reading or sending messages while their friends or parents were in the car.

But

- 95% of the young drivers in the survey admitted to reading texts and emails while driving alone.

AT&T conducted a survey of commuters and found the following results:

- Nearly half of commuters self-reported texting while driving, and 43% of those who did called it a "habit."
- Commuters are texting and driving even more than teens – 49%, compared to 43%. And the problem has gotten worse.

- Six in ten commuters said they never texted while driving three years ago.

With so many drivers understanding that texting while driving is dangerous, many have turned to hands-free texting programs that allow commuters to compose texts and emails by voice. However, a study conducted by Texas A&M's Transportation Institute showed that these programs aren't any safer. The study was conducted on a closed course with 43 male and female drivers of all ages. The drivers were tested under four conditions; without texting, manual texting, using Siri, and Vlingo hands-free programs.

Among their findings:

- Driver reaction times were nearly two times slower than the baseline condition, no matter which texting method was used.
- The percentage of time drivers spent looking at the forward roadway significantly decreased in any of the three texting conditions compared to the baseline.

The study shows that hand-free texting is no safer than manual texting.

Driver distraction is a major problem on the roads today. The 87% of the teen crashes in April that involved loss of control were probably due to a driver distraction of some sort. Parent/commuters need to not only set strict rules for their teens but also need to set the example and take the "It can wait!" pledge.

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