

# Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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## Traffic Deaths Spike During Spring Break



Traffic deaths spike during spring break according to a study released recently by the journal *Economic Inquiry*. The researchers looked at different spring break hot spots and found the number of traffic fatalities in those localities were significantly higher compared to other localities in the same states at the same time of year.

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For Teens and their Parents



The researchers from Department of Sociology in the University of Miami (UM) College of Arts and Sciences studied fatal traffic crashes from the last week of February to the first week of April in 14 spring break hot spots across seven states; Arizona, California, Florida, Nevada, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia.

Key findings include:

The weekly death toll resulting from car crashes in the 14 spring break counties was 9.1 percent higher during the spring break season compared to other weeks of the year.

This translates into 16 more traffic deaths per year in all 14 counties examined.

There was a significantly higher incidence of traffic fatalities that involved out-of-state drivers than in-state drivers.

Fatalities involving drivers younger than 25 years old were far more common than fatalities involving older drivers.

During the spring break season, there was no significant increase in traffic fatalities in non-spring

break counties located in the same states as the spring break counties—supporting a true spring break effect.

One of the most interesting findings was the fact that “There were no statistically significant differences between traffic fatalities involving drivers with alcohol impairment compared to those with no alcohol impairment.” While alcohol certainly has an impact, this finding shows that other factors such as driver distraction are equally as dangerous.

During spring break, there are so many things that can distract a driver including:

Large crowds of pedestrians on the road.

Festivals, rock concerts, and promotional events in view of the roadway.

A car full of excited young people in search of a good time.

Hot bikinis and six-pack abs along the roadways.

Driver fatigue.

A driver needs to not only be aware of and try to ignore the distractions but also be on the lookout for other distracted or drunk drivers.

If you feel that you may be missing out on the views while concentrating on the road, take turns swapping driving duties with a friend in order to become a spectator.

Don't become a statistic during spring break. Make sure that your spring break provides a lifetime of fond

memories and not a lifetime of pain and regret.

Read more: [Traffic fatalities spike during spring break](#)

## Passengers Affect Teen Safe Driving Attitude



Teen passengers can have a big affect on a teen driver's safe driving attitude according to a recent study published in the journal *Health Psychology*. According to the research, a teen passenger's personal attitudes about risky driving habits can influence the teen driver to engage in risky driving behaviors.

It has long been known that the more [teen passengers](#) there are in a teen driver's car, the greater the risk of a crash. According to a [2012 study](#) by the AAA Foundation For Traffic Safety, a teen driver's risk of involvement in a deadly crash increases by 44 percent with one teen passenger in the vehicle. The risk doubles with two teen passengers and quadruples with three or more passengers.

According to the new study, a teen driver is more willing to engage in risky driving behaviors if he (this is especially true for male teens) perceives that his passengers approve of those risky behaviors. The passengers don't have to specifically tell the driver to take risks but can give subtle clues of their approval.

To find out why this was so, the researchers studied 66 teen drivers in a simulated driving situation. The teens were told that they were being paired up for the simulation with another randomly selected teen (actually a young-looking research assistant). The research assistants played two different rolls. Upon first meeting one assistant would arrive late and say “Sorry I was a little late getting here.

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Normally I drive way faster, but I hit like every red light.”

The other research assistant would tell his teen partner “Sorry I was a little late getting here. I tend to drive slowly, plus I hit every yellow light.”

The teen was then asked if his partner could try out the simulator first “just for fun”. The research assistant who said he tended to drive fast would then “drive” the simulator without using a seat belt and in an aggressive manner. The other assistant who said he typically drove slowly obeyed the traffic rules and drove as safely as he could.

The research subjects were then given the opportunity to drive the simulated course alone and then with their partner as a passenger. Their driving behavior was measured by tracking whether or not the subject failed to stop for red lights and how much time was spent in the intersection after the light turned red.

All the research subjects tended to take more risks when they had a passenger with them but those with the aggressive driving partner took far more risks than those with the risk-averse partner. Even though they had just met their passenger and the passenger didn’t pressure the teen drivers in any way, the teen drivers tended to adopt the risky or safe driving attitude of their passengers.

According to research by the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, only 10 percent of teens correctly view passengers as potentially hazardous. Teen peer pressure can be overt or it can be subtle. Teens who ride as passengers in another teen’s vehicle should be taught that it’s OK to tell the driver to stop his or her risky behavior. Both teen drivers and teen passengers need to be **taught that the actions of passengers can be distracting** to the teen driver and taught to modify their behavior accordingly.



## YouTube Videos Fail to Show Whole Story



YouTube videos of alcohol use by young people fail to show the whole story and can be a dangerous influence on teens. This conclusion is the result of a [study](#) conducted by the Center for Research on Media, Technology, and Health, at the University of Pittsburgh and published in the journal *Alcoholism Clinical and Experimental Research*.

The study’s authors looked at 70 of the most popular YouTube videos regarding alcohol intoxication. Combined, the videos had a total of more than 333.2 million views and the number of “like” designations totaled more than 99 percent compared to less than one percent of “dislikes.” Twenty-four percent of the videos involved the use of motor vehicles.

The problem with the videos, according to the researchers, is that the videos portray alcohol use in a funny or glamorous way without showing any of the negative aspects of alcohol use. Negative aspects of alcohol use include, but aren’t limited to: vomiting, sexual assault, car crashes, arrest, and death by alcohol poisoning.

For parents, these videos open up an opportunity to start a dialogue with teens about those negative aspects of alcohol use that aren’t portrayed in the YouTube videos.

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