

Nighttime and Drowsy Driving

The single biggest risk factor

Fifty-eight percent of teen crash deaths occur between 6pm and 6am (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety). As reported by a [2010 study by Texas A&M Transportation Institute](#), this is primarily due to a combination of the visibility challenges caused by dark conditions, slower response time brought about by fatigue, and a lack of experience driving under such conditions. It is largely for these reasons that most states include a nighttime driving restriction in Graduated Driver License (GDL) laws. In most states with a GDL law, the nighttime restriction and a limit on the number of passengers allowed are the most widely implemented features of that law.



The problem of visibility:

- The average person's field of vision is smaller without the aid of light, and glare from oncoming headlights can further limit the ability to see clearly and avoid hazards¹.
- High Intensity lights are becoming more common. These lights are brighter to on-coming traffic and require your eyes to adjust faster².
- It is more difficult to judge other vehicle's speeds and distances at night.
- Dusk is the most dangerous time since your eyes are constantly having to adjust to more darkness³.
- Rural roadways can be especially dangerous at night due to higher numbers of unlit roadways.
- On average, 62% of fatal teen crashes occurred on rural roadways and an average of 53% of the fatal crashes occurred between 6 pm – 6 am⁴.

What to do about poor visibility:

- As always, wear your seat belt. The danger of driving at night should not be multiplied by being unsecured.
- Keep distractions to a minimum to keep your eyes and attention on the road.
- Turn headlights on at dusk and observe night driving safety as soon as the sun goes down³.
- Reduce your speed and increase your following distances. Don't overdrive your headlights. You should be able to stop inside the illuminated area. If you can't, you are creating a blind crash area in front of your vehicle³.
- Keep your headlights and windshield clean. A thin film of debris on your headlights can reduce your visibility significantly².
- If an oncoming vehicle's lights are too high, avoid glare by watching the right edge of the road and using it as a steering guide³.
- Have your headlights properly aimed. Misaimed headlights blind other drivers and reduce your ability to see the road³.

The problem of drowsy driving:

- Research suggests that teens should have 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night. Most teens do not get enough sleep — one study found that only 15% reported sleeping 8 1/2 hours on school nights⁵.
- Being awake for 18 hours is similar to having a blood alcohol concentration of .05 and .10 after 24 hrs. .08 is legally intoxicated for adults over 21⁵.
- Young drivers have a higher risk of falling asleep behind the wheel⁵.
- Sleepiness or fatigue causes the following⁶:
 - Impaired reaction time, judgment, and vision
 - Problems with information processing and short-term memory
 - Decreased performance, vigilance, and motivation
 - Increased moodiness and aggressive behaviors
- A recent study (2015) found that individuals who have slept less than 2 hours in the prior 24 hours are too sleep deprived to get behind the wheel of a vehicle⁶.
- A recent survey found that teens report being “reluctant to miss out” and have an “always-on lifestyle” that can contribute to drowsy driving as they are getting less than six hours of sleep each night⁷.
 - 70% of teens surveyed admitted to driving tired
 - 50% reported actually falling asleep or nearly falling asleep at the wheel citing:
 - A busy schedule: 43%
 - Staying up late to do homework: 32%
 - Staying up late for social activities: 24%
 - Working late hours during the week: 20%
 - Being tired or hung over from drinking/partying the night before: 10%

What to do about drowsy driving:

- Here are some signs of being tired and it's time to pull over⁸:
 - Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking and/or heavy eyelids
 - Difficulty keeping daydreams at bay
 - Trouble keeping your head up
 - Drifting from your lane, swerving, tailgating and/or hitting rumble strips
 - Inability to clearly remember the last few miles driven
 - Missing exits or traffic signs
 - Yawning repeatedly
 - Feeling restless, irritable, or aggressive

- Before you drive, consider whether you are⁸:
 - Sleep-deprived or fatigued (6 hours of sleep or less triples your risk)
 - Suffering from sleep loss (insomnia) or poor quality sleep
 - Driving long distances without proper rest breaks
 - Driving through the night or when you would normally be asleep
 - Taking medications that make you tired (cold tablets, antihistamines)
 - Studying a lot or attending more activities than usual, which may be decreasing your sleep time
 - Drinking even small amounts of alcohol
 - Driving alone or on a long, rural, dark or boring road
- What you can do to prevent falling asleep while driving⁸:
 - Get a good night's sleep before you hit the road. You'll want to be alert for the drive, so be sure to get adequate sleep the night before you go
 - Don't be too rushed to arrive at your destination. Many drivers try to maximize the holiday weekend by driving at night or without stopping for breaks
 - It's better to allow the time to drive alert and arrive alive
 - Use the buddy system. Just as you should not swim alone, avoid driving alone for long distances. A buddy who remains awake for the journey can take a turn behind the wheel and help identify the warning signs of fatigue
 - Take a break every 100 miles or 2 hours. Do something to refresh yourself like getting a snack, switching drivers, or going for a run
 - Take a nap—find a safe place to take a 15 to 20-minute nap, if you think you might fall asleep. Be cautious about excessive drowsiness after waking up
 - Avoid alcohol and medications that cause drowsiness as a side-effect
 - Avoid driving at times when you would normally be asleep
 - Consume caffeine. The equivalent of two cups of coffee can increase alertness for several hours

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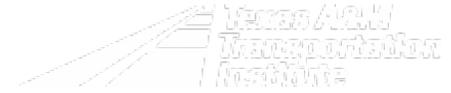
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Speeding and Street Racing

Teens do not consider driving 5 to 10 miles above the speed limit to be dangerous

The problem of speeding:

- About 33 percent of young driver and passenger deaths occur in speed-related crashes¹.
- In a high-speed crash, a passenger vehicle cannot withstand the force of the crash and maintain the passenger compartment. Also, as crash speeds get very high, restraint systems such as airbags and seat belts cannot keep the forces on occupants below severe injury levels².
- Speed influences the risk of crashes and crash injuries in three basic ways²:
 - It increases the distance a vehicle travels from the time a driver detects an emergency to the time the driver reacts, so by the time you realize you need to react, you've traveled closer to the danger.
 - It increases the braking distance. For example, If you double your speed – say from 30 mph to 60 mph – your braking distance does not become twice as long. It becomes four times as far. Traveling at 55 mph, it will take about 6 seconds to stop your vehicle. The vehicle will travel approximately 302 feet before coming to a stop. That is longer than the length of a football field³.
 - It increases the crash energy by the square of the speeds. For example, when impact speed increases from 40 to 60 mph (a 50 percent increase), the energy that needs to be managed increases by 125 percent.
- The total stopping distance of your vehicle depends on four things³:
 - Your perception time
 - Your reaction time
 - Your vehicle reaction time
 - Your vehicle braking capability
- Teens are more likely than older drivers to speed and allow shorter headways (the distance from the front of one vehicle to the front of the next)⁴.
- Speeding has been found to be more prevalent among teenagers who reported more risky friends, particularly among those who reported lower perceived risk for risky driving⁵
- Those with exclusive access to a vehicle were more likely to speed than those who shared a vehicle and more likely to speed at night and with passengers⁶.



What to do about speeding:

- Know with every mile per hour increase you also increase your reaction travel time, braking distance and crash energy².
- High speed wrecks compromise your car's safety features².
- When you speed, you also decrease the judgment of other drivers to be able to gauge your distance and speed.
- Understand speed limits are set with safety in mind. They are based on roadside environment, roadway design and pedestrian traffic².
- Speeding to keep up with the flow of traffic is not legal and you can still be ticketed.
- Speeding decreases your fuel efficiency.
- You should always be able to stop within the distance you can see ahead.
- Consider road conditions, weather and road design and slow down accordingly.
- It is easier to lose traction when speeding around a curve and the high center of gravity makes it easier to roll over. Slow down before curves.
- Remember to use the two-second rule to keep a safe distance between you and the car ahead of you.

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Low Safety Belt Use

Safety belt use continues to be lowest with 16- to 24-year-olds

The problem of low safety belt use:

- Roughly 2 out of every 5 teenagers involved in a fatal crash were not wearing a seat belt including drivers and passengers¹.
- Passengers between the ages of 18-19 years old had the highest percentage of unbelted passengers involved in fatal crashes².
- In 2013, the use of seat belts in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 12,584 lives. Seat belts have saved nearly 63,000 lives during the 5-year-period from 2008 to 2012³.
- You can be ticketed for not wearing a safety belt – even if you are sitting in the back seat. If you are in a state that does not have a primary seat belt law (police can't pull you over just for not wearing a seat belt) check to verify if there is a law that requires anyone under the age of 18 to be buckled up. [Visit here for more seatbelt laws](#).
- A safety belt does not protect you when it's not worn properly³.
- Overall seat belt use is improving among teens. In 2013, 7.6% of teens reported never or rarely wearing a seat belt when driving with someone else within the last 30 days compared to 25.95 in 1991⁴.



What to do about safety belts:

- When referring to safety belts, “properly worn” means with both straps snugly fitted to transfer
- the impact of the collision to the parts of your body that can take it – your hipbones and shoulder bones. With just the shoulder strap on, you can slide out from under the seat belt and be strangled, while the lap belt alone doesn’t keep your face from hitting the steering wheel⁵.
- A safety belt is your best and last protection if you are in an accident
- During a crash, being buckled up helps keep you safe and secure inside your vehicle. Being thrown out of a vehicle is almost always deadly³.
- Air bags are designed to work with safety belts, not replace them. In fact, if you don’t wear your seat belt, you could be thrown into an opening airbag and be injured or even killed².
- Get in the habit of always putting your safety belt on every time you get into a vehicle. No matter where you are sitting or the distance you are going.
- Ask your passengers to buckle up also. You are responsible for their safety.

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Impaired Driving

Drivers between 16-20 are 17 times more likely to die in a crash when they have a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .08% compared to when they have not been drinking

The problem of driving under the influence:

- Young drivers are less likely than adults to drive after drinking alcohol, but their crash risk is substantially higher when they do. This is especially true at low and moderate blood alcohol concentrations (BACs)¹.
- Drivers are less likely to use restraints when they have been drinking³.
- In the most recent survey, 1 out of every 13 high school students 16 and older reported drinking and driving in the past 30 days².
- In 2013, 21.9% of students nationwide had ridden one or more times in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol in the past 30 days⁴.
- In 2014, the amount of 16-17 year older drivers involved in fatal crashes with a BAC greater than .08 increased from 10% to 15%⁵.
- Most of those killed in alcohol-related crashes involving teen drivers are the young drivers themselves and their passengers³.



What to do about driving under the influence of alcohol:

- Driving after even one drink is just not worth it. Ride with a sober friend, ask someone else to drive or call a parent or older sibling.
- Food, coffee or exercise will not reduce the amount of alcohol in your system. Only time decreases the effects of alcohol.
- Don't believe you can "fool" a police officer. They are trained to look for tale-tell signs of a driver who is under the influence.
- If a friend has been drinking and is about to drive, speak up. Offer to drive, take the keys or call a parent.
- Never get in the car with a driver who has been drinking. Everyone reacts to alcohol differently. If you know a friend has been drinking, assume they are unable to drive.

The law and other consequences of driving under the influence:

- Zero tolerance law makes it illegal per se (in and of itself) for persons under the age of 21 to drive with any measurable amount of alcohol in their blood³.
- Violators of underage drinking laws often face a trip to jail, the loss of their driver's license, and dozens of other unanticipated expenses including attorney fees, court costs, and other fines³.

- A DUI conviction follows a teen, so there is the added embarrassment, humiliation, and potential loss and consequence related to academic eligibility, college acceptance, scholarship awards, and more³.
- Increased efforts by local law enforcement make the chances of getting caught even greater³.
- The Texas Department of Transportation conducted a study which found that a first time offender could expect to pay between \$5,000 and \$24,000 for DWI arrest and conviction.

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Distracted Driving

A distraction is anything that takes your mind and attention away from driving

The problem of distractions:

- There are three main types of distraction¹:
 - Visual — taking your eyes off the road
 - Manual — taking your hands off the wheel
 - Cognitive — taking your mind off what you're doing
- A recent survey by [Liberty Mutual and SADD \(Students Against Destructive Decisions\)](#) found that teens felt pressure to stay connected or “always on” contributed to their need to engage with cell phones, even while driving²:
 - 48% of teens reported texting more when alone in their car
 - 55% reported texting while driving to update parents
 - 37% reported texting to coordinate or confirm event details with friends
 - 34% reported taking their eye off the road when receiving an app notification
- Most popular apps teens report using behind the wheel include²:
 - Snapchat: 38%
 - Instagram: 20%
 - Twitter: 17%
 - Facebook: 12%
 - Youtube: 12%



Cell phones:

- Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves³.
- Hand-held cell phone use while driving continues to be highest among female drivers and drivers ages 16-24 years of age⁴.
- Engaging in visual-manual subtasks (such as reaching for a phone, dialing and texting) associated with the use of hand-held phones and other portable devices increased the risk of getting into a crash by three times⁵.
- 10% of drivers of all ages under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash and *represents the greatest portion of distracted drivers*⁶.

- Texting and driving causes reaction time to double and those drivers have a harder time staying in their lane and maintaining a consistent speed⁷.

Passengers:

- More fatal teen crashes occur when passengers (often other teens) are in the car⁴.
- Over two out of four teens that died as passengers are in vehicles driven by other teens³.
- Research has shown that crash risk and risk of being killed in a crash increases as the number of young passengers in the vehicle increases. One study found a 44% increase in crash risk adding one passenger; two passengers doubled the risk of being killed and 3 passengers quadrupled the risk of dying in a crash⁸.
- Additionally, crash risk was shown to be decreased when the passenger was older than 35 highlighting the safety factor of supervised driving for teens⁸.

What to do about distracted driving:

- Focus on the road. When you are driving is not the time to multi-task.
- Keep distractions out of the car. If you know you will be tempted to look at or use your phone, lock it in the trunk or turn it off.
- Ask passengers to obey your rules while they are in the car, meaning buckle up and don't distract you.
- Designate a texter. If you have a passenger, hand over your phone so they can do your texting or talking for you.
- Be a good passenger by not distracting the driver.
- Know that as a driver, you have the responsibility to yourself and others. A vehicle is heavy machine and should be treated with respect.
- Set your music/radio before you take your car out of Park.
- Never use headphones while driving. It's illegal and dangerous.
- Keep passengers to a minimum. If every person doesn't have a seat belt, you have too many passengers.
- If you don't feel well or emotionally able to drive – don't. Ask for a ride or wait until you are able.
- Know your limitations. Driving experience comes with time. It's ok to not be ready for certain driving conditions. Never feel pressured to drive dangerously or beyond your experience.

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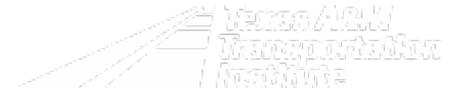
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