How To Be A Safe Driver Essay, Research Paper

Safe Driving

BACKGROUND AND STATISTICS

Driving is an essential part of American life. Driving a private vehicle provides a freedom of mobility that allows for changes in plans and routine. Driving can be fun or hectic, business-related or recreational. But most importantly driving CAN BE, and every year IS, fatal for almost 50,000 Americans.

Nationally there are approximately 18.1 auto-related deaths per 100,000 people for all ages; but when these figures are broken down into age groups one group stands out. Male drivers between the ages of 15 and 24 years old have 48.2 auto-related deaths per 100,000 population, a rate 2 1/2 times the national average. (Female drivers between the ages of 15 and 24 years have 18.4 auto-related deaths per 100,000 population which approximates the national average.) These figures suggest that, although overall improvement is necessary, young male drivers should be targeted as a group that needs increased attention.

Automobile companies have made great improvement in car safety with seatbelts, shoulder straps, headrests, air-bags, padded dashes, safety glass, collapsible steering columns, controlled crush characteristics, anti-locking breaks and a host of other less recognized improvements. Highway improvements have similarly decreased accidents and deaths and efforts to remove intoxicated drivers from the roads should offer similar improvements. That still leaves the question of the teenage driver.

Automobile insurance companies report that from a statistical standpoint, teenage driving deaths frequently occur:

after dark

with passengers other than family members (seldom solo)

following alcohol use

with recreational rather than work related use

SUGGESTIONS TO REDUCE ACCIDENT RISK

The accident rate for young drivers CAN be improved by following a few simple suggestions!

Driver’s education is recommended by many insurance companies. These courses have been demonstrated to decrease the frequency of accidents among those that have taken them.

For the first 3 to 6 months after obtaining a driver’s license:

Don’t drive alone. An adult driver with a good driving record should accompany the new driver on most excursions. This experienced driver can note any problems the new driver is having and help correct them before they become permanently poor driving habits.

Don’t carry passengers. Passengers should not be transported until the new driver has a consistently safe driving record without traffic citations or driver-caused accidents. Passengers, to the new driver, represent a source of distraction and also of increased responsibility and liability. (Note: This liability may, under some circumstances, extend to the parent.)

Don’t drive after dark. Automatic reflexes and driving skills are just developing during those first few months of driving. Darkness adds another element that can be confusing to a new driver. Nighttime is also the most frequent time to find intoxicated drivers on the road. Accident-avoidance skills will not be as well developed in the new driver making it more difficult to correct for problems should the new driver encounter an intoxicated one.

Know the effects of alcohol. The slowing of reflexes and decrease in judgment are not something that happens just to others; it happens to everyone.

Have rules and stick to them. For example, should the parents discover that the teenager has been driving following any alcohol consumption the parent may ask the state to suspend the license until the teenager is 18. (In many states the parent must sign for a teenager under 18 to obtain a driver’s license. At any time before the 18th birthday a parent can refuse responsibility and the state will take the license.)

The inconvenience of a few months of extra training is little to give up in the face of a possible ruined life or no life at all. SAFE DRIVING ROCKS!!!!!!!