

Lights ‘n Sirens: The Deadliest Days of Summer

By Flo Lennox

As I write this article I am so thankful for all those that took the time to recognize our Volunteers for National Volunteer Week. Metro West Ambulance, Dutch Brothers, Home Depot, Pizza Schmizza, Chubb Insurance Co and so many community members showered the Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association with cards and a wave of thanks. In this time of social distancing our volunteers are still out protecting our small town.

How to deal with social distancing and self isolation

Check on your neighbors, not just the elderly but young families may need guidance and assistance too. As the weather improves get outside, work on your yard, take a walk, hike where allowed – protect yourself and others with the 6 foot rule, and wear a face mask if shopping or in close contact with others. If you are making face masks you can donate them to businesses that are still open, the senior center, your neighbor, the clinic, or the Ambulance service so they can be passed out to anyone in need. As Oregon prepares to open our doors again, wearing face masks may be the new normal for the next few months.

The 100 Deadliest Days of Summer – but this year it should be closer to 150 Deadliest Days

(According to data analyzed by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.)

Another summer is upon us and, as we make plans for vacations and summer fun, we would like to join our We Save Lives partners in reminding you that we are entering the “100 Deadliest Days of Summer.” This may be the time to relax and plan for summer fun but IT IS NOT the time to relax while driving, especially for your teens. Just look at some of the facts:

In 2018, 2,364 teens in the United States aged 16-19 were killed, and about 300,000 were treated in emergency departments for injuries suffered in motor vehicle crashes. That means six teens aged 16-19 died every day due to motor vehicle crashes, and hundreds more were injured.

- Motor Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens.
- Teens have the highest crash rate of any age group.
- An average 260 teens are killed in car crashes each month during the summer, an *increase* of 26% compared with the other months of the year.
- 60% of teen crashes today are caused by distracted driving.
- Surprisingly, the top distraction for teens is other passengers, accounting for 15% of teen driver crashes, compared to 12 % caused by texting or talking on a cell phone.
- Not only are teens themselves more likely to die in car crashes, they also have the highest rates of crash involvement resulting in the deaths of others, including passengers, pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles.

Speed and nighttime driving are significant factors contributing toward the number of crashes, and subsequently fatalities, involving teen drivers

Nighttime Driving

- 36% of all motor vehicle fatalities involving teen drivers occurred between 9:00 pm and 5:00 am
- 1 in 10 of all motor vehicle nighttime crash fatalities involved a teen driver
- Data show a 22% increase in the average number of nighttime crashes per day involving teen drivers during the 100 Deadliest Days compared to the rest of the year

Speeding (*We have seen a increase of speeding on Oregon roadways during this time of quarantine, some in excess of 107 mph on busy streets*)

- 1 in 10 of all motor vehicle speed-related fatalities involved a teen driver
- 29% of all motor vehicle deaths involving a teen driver were speed-related

In preparation for the dangerous summer driving period, AAA encourages parents to educate their teens and themselves about risky driving behavior. According to the National Safety Council a recent survey reported that 91% of parents who use their cell phones while driving do it in front of their teens knowing that they are “one of their teens’ primary driving teachers.”

Parents should:

- Discuss with teens early and often the dangers of risky driving situations, such as speeding and nighttime driving.
- Teach by example and minimize your own risky behavior when behind the wheel.
- Make a parent-teen driving agreement that sets family rules for teen drivers. Consider setting driving limits that are stronger than a state’s law, and enforce those limits.
- Remind teens that impaired driving is not only dangerous; it is a crime.

Getting arrested for driving drugged or drunk can ruin the potential for a college education, a good job, and increase insurance costs, not to mention the fine, lawyer’s fees, etc. There are some practical things to consider here that we often forget in our hurry to see our young people have fun.

Parents: It means that you should not be serving alcohol or other drugs to minors at parties. You should lead by example, eliminate distractions behind the wheel, and always drive sober.

- Give them permission and encouragement to call you if they are in a potentially dangerous driving situation. Let them know you will pick them up without recriminations.
- Empower them to show courage and decline a ride from a friend who has been drinking or taking drugs. Saying “no thanks” may make the difference between life and death.
- Encourage them to sign the “Courage to Intervene” promise.

Automobiles are not the only danger for your children: May is National Bike Month

Bicycle-related deaths peak in the summer, so this is an ideal time to adopt some proven injury-prevention strategies before sharing the road with motor vehicles. There were 857 bicyclists killed in traffic crashes in the United States in 2018. As you might ex-

pect, when a crash occurs between a vehicle and a bike, it’s the cyclist who is most likely to be injured.

Be Prepared Before Heading Out

- Ride a bike that fits you – if it’s too big, it’s harder to control the bike.
- Ride a bike that works – it really doesn’t matter how well you ride if the brakes don’t work.
- Wear equipment to protect you and make you more visible to others, like a bike helmet, bright clothing (during the day), reflective gear, and a white front light and red rear light and reflectors on your bike (at night, or when visibility is poor).
- Ride one per seat, with both hands on the handlebars, unless signaling a turn.
- Carry all items in a backpack or strapped to the back of the bike.
- Tuck and tie your shoe laces and pant legs so they don’t get caught in your bike chain.
- Plan your route – if driving as a vehicle on the road, choose routes with less traffic and slower speeds. Your safest route may be away from traffic altogether, in a bike lane or on a bike path.

Be focused and alert to the road and all traffic around you; anticipate what others may do, before they do it. This is defensive driving – the quicker you notice a potential conflict, the quicker you can act to avoid a potential crash.

- Drive with the flow, in the same direction as traffic.
- Obey street signs, signals, and road markings, just like a car.
- Assume the other person doesn’t see you; look ahead for hazards or situations to avoid that may cause you to fall, like toys, pebbles, potholes, grates, and train tracks.
- No texting, listening to music, or using anything that distracts you by taking your eyes and ears, or your mind, off the road and traffic.

By driving predictably motorists get a sense of what you intend to do and can react to avoid a crash. Drive where you are expected to be seen, signal and look over your shoulder before changing lane position or turning. Avoid or minimize sidewalk riding. Cars don’t expect to see moving traffic on a sidewalk and don’t look for you when backing out of a driveway or turning. Sidewalks sometimes end unexpectedly, forcing the bicyclist into a road. If you must ride on the sidewalk remember to:

- Check your law to make sure sidewalk riding is legal.
- Watch for pedestrians.
- Pass pedestrians with care by first announcing “on your left” or “passing on your left” or use a bell.
- Ride in the same direction as traffic.
- Slow and look for traffic (left-right-left and behind) when crossing a street from a sidewalk; be prepared to stop and follow the pedestrian signals.
- Slow down and look for cars backing out of driveways or turning.

No one learns to drive a vehicle safely without practice and experience; safely riding your bike in traffic requires the same preparation. Start by riding your bike in a safe environment away from traffic (a park, path, or empty parking lot).

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