Healthy Youth

A key strategy for injury prevention--driving and teens

Editor's note: This is part of a series of messages brought to you by your Morrow County health care providers.

Parents often have many concerns and fear for their teen's safety on the road. Few teens and preteens ever think about the rules of the road or how to drive safely until they're just about to start driving. For something as important as driving, we want your kids to get a head start.

According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), teenage drivers are four times more likely to be involved in a car crash than adult drivers. Motor vehicle accidents are the number one cause of death and injury for people ages 8-24. Problems which contribute to the high crash rate of young drivers include: driving inexperience, lack of adequate driving skills, risk taking, poor driving judgment and decision making, distraction, alcohol consumption and excessive driving during high-risk hours (11 p.m. to 5 a.m.).

Parents should be comfortable with their teen's level of driving skill, and experience is important before allowing him or her to drive independently. Talk candidly with your teen about your expectations for driving, demonstrate the importance of controlling emotions while driving (e.g. "road rage," drag racing, etc.) and teach the importance of defensive driving. Supervised behind-the-wheel driving experience is the key to developing necessary habits and skills for safe driving. Parents who work with their teens will help them gain the needed experience and judgment.

Even though the driver's license allows the teen to drive independently, it is important that parents establish clear rules for safe and responsible driving and rules for the use of the car.

Rules for parents to consider:

-Parents should not allow young drivers unrestricted driving privileges until they have gained sufficient experience.

-Parents should limit their teen's driving alone in adverse weather conditions (rain, snow, ice, fog, etc.) and at night until the teen has sufficient skills and experience.

-Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal and dangerous and should be strictly prohibited.

-Parents should work out when and where the teen is allowed to drive the car.

-Everyone in the car must wear seat belts at all times.

-Parents should determine whether and when their teen can drive passengers.

-Parents should determine what behavior or circumstances will result in loss of the teen's driving privileges.

-Teens should not drive when fatigued or tired.

-Headphones should never be worn while driving.

-Teens should not text, talk on the phone or be distracted by any activity while driving. Kids are always watching, even when you think they're not. So be a good example.

Lastly, make sure that the vehicle your teen drives is in safe condition (brakes, tires, etc.) and working properly. The vehicle should have essential emergency equipment (flares, flashlight, jumper cables, etc.) and the teen should know how to use it.

Information is available to provide teens and preteens with the tools and support they need to make responsible choices before they are ready to drive or ride with other young, new drivers. Countdown2Drive (http://countdown2drive.org) is a unique program, aimed at creating a conversation between parent and teens with the goal of creating safer passengers today, hopefully resulting in better drivers tomorrow.

Ruckus raises the roof at fairgrounds

The third annual Ruckus in the Boonies took place at the Morrow County Fairgrounds this past weekend. The music festival boasted more than 30 bands and pulled in a large out-of-town crowd. -*Contributed photo*

FARM HOUSING

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Myers said under the H2A Visa program they would be using, the workers would come mainly from Mexico and Central America, could work for three seasons and then would have to take one year off.

He said there would be no family members so there would be little impact on the schools and family-type issues.

He said the workers would be here a maximum of 18 months before returning to their home country, and that they would be screened before being allowed to come here.

Concerning treatment of the workers Myers said there are certain rules the company has to follow, including transportation to various services.

"We don't have all the answers today but we are starting small and will increase."

He said they were asking for an 800-person facility; however, most likely would start much smaller "and may not even get to 800 people."

He said there is no federal funding of the visa program, and that the company would pay the workers $12.67 per hour, plus health insurance, and housing and meals would all be included.

"People will be treated with respect. I want people to drive by and say 'Wow!'" He said in Washington, where the programs has been used in the orchards, that "if you treat people right they will work hard and come back. They are here for one reason—to make money."

Out of the 20 people in the audience at the public hearing, several people testified against the project. Ellen Walter of Boardman said she "can't imagine" 800 men in Boardman. She asked what would keep the workers from walking away from the facility and staying the country. She also asked about their free time and what they would be doing.

Raymond Akers of Boardman told the county commissioners they should vote against the zone change and worker facility because there was not adequate notice given to the public and conflict of interest on the planning commission. He did not specify what that conflict was.

Akers said he was also against the facility because it would be disruptive to the community and that he feared for his family. He said he is the father of two girls and did not like the idea of the increased traffic on nearby Kunze Road.

Akers also said he didn't think there would be a problem filling the jobs locally if Threemile tried. He said he wanted to see more transparency in the decision process and more meetings the public could attend.

Also testifying against the facility was Boardman resident Kelly Doherty, wife of county commissioner-elect Jim Doherty. Doherty said she thought there was not enough community input into the decision making. "I have people say, 'They are doing what?'"

She said she hired a professional planner to study the proposal, who submitted a lengthy written report against the facility to the commissioners.

Doherty said county department heads had quite a bit of concern over the project, which had not been taken into consideration. She had asked that the decision be sent back to the planning commission for further review.

Bruce Kirkendall of Boardman also testified against the facility. Saying he has spent most of his life in real estate business, Kirkendall said the worker facility would have a large impact on surrounding landowners.

"I question if any of you have experience with a labor camp. I have spent time in labor camps. There was booze, drugs and hookers," he said. "If they have 800 workers you are drastically increasing our population. It will impact property in that area," he emphasized.

He wanted to know if it was going to be all male workers and said, if so, that would create problems. He said there would crime, sexual assaults and more. He asked that there be more input from Boardman people.

"If you talk to 100 people you won't find five in favor of this," he said.

Also speaking against the project with letters were Bobbi Childers and former county commissioner John Wenholz. "As a former commissioner for Morrow County and a longtime resident, this is not something to make people want to live in the Boardman Community or Morrow County," Wenholz wrote. "The costs to the City of Boardman and the County of Morrow will be significant if this goes through. What about medical, schools and resources to serve these people? When you bring people into a community with the idea that they can be bused to town once a week that is more like a prison camp. Who will police these people? Why consider putting them out on property that is in the middle of other citizens farms in Morrow County, and not the petitioner's farm property where it is zoned EFU?" Wenholz wrote.

Childers, who is Morrow County Clerk but was writing as a private citizen, said in part, "Having a farm worker housing in the middle of the other farm property makes no sense to me at all (put it on Threemile Farm property). If you want the people to work for this farm, they should be willing to put this on their property and still take care of the people as they say they will. I understand that this farm does not allow law enforcement on the property. That makes me wonder why. I see this as bringing people into our county, dependent on a company that will keep track of them and take care of all the needs? Who will track them when they walk off or get into trouble?" Childers wrote in part of her letter.

After hearing all the testimony, along with others against, Myers and his land-use attorney returned from a recess at the hearing and announced that they were withdrawing the application for the zone change, which would have facilitated construction of the migrant housing facility.

Morrow County Road Department would like to remind all motorists that with any road maintenance project to be aware of the workers, they are very important to us.

Watch for signs, flags and work-zone employees and equipment. Morrow County's goal is to provide a safe roadway. However, it is always up to the motorist to drive according to conditions. Be patient and plan ahead. Leave early if you know you will be driving through work zones. Please use extreme caution and common sense. They will do their best and would appreciate your patience.

Some areas to be aware of and use caution this summer/fall around are July 11-21 Ione-Gooseberry / Dry—Fork chip seal project. On or around July 25 – Aug. 12. Bombing Range Road Overlay Project. July 25— 28 Big Butter Creek Chip seal project. August 1–4 Basey Canyon / Upper Rhea Creek chip seal Project. August 8—11 Jordan Grade Overlay Project. August 15—18 Dee Cox Overlay Project. As the time and equipment allows Laurel/Wilson Intersection. Keene bridge and Snider Bridge on Rhea creek and some overlay projects on the North end. Kunze and Tower road overlay along with Paterson Ferry road included with some smaller overlay projects. 3rd street and others.

Again be prepared and be safe.
Questions or concerns may be addressed to 541-989-9500 Morrow County Road Department.

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FATAL CRASH

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A Condon teen was killed last week when her vehicle collided with a grain truck. -*Photo courtesy of Oregon State Police*

International truck towing a grain trailer.

The driver of the Caprice, a 17-year-old female from Condon, was extricated from her vehicle and taken by air ambulance to Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles where she died from her injuries. Police did not release the teen's name.

The truck driver, Benjamin McElligott, 35, of Ione was not injured.

OSP was assisted by the Gilliam County Sheriff's Office, Gilliam County EMS, fire and rescue, Sherman County Sheriff's Office, and the Oregon Department of Transportation. The investigation into the crash is still underway. More information will be released as it becomes available.

Community members who need mental health assistance or counseling regarding the accident are asked to contact Community Counseling Services at 541-384-2666.