

Understanding Teen Driver Car Crashes

Whenever we get behind the wheel of a car we begin the process of risk analysis and risk assessment.

We are looking about and answering these questions with every glance, is there anything in my way keeping me from implementing this action?

Is it safe? How can I best go about implementing this action and what might the likely consequences be?

This is why we look behind before backing up, or look both ways before entering the roadway. We are determining issues of risk.

Only after we have determined issues of risk (unless asleep or distracted) do we take action.

This is the course of normal human thought or cognitive processes when operating a motor vehicle and it all occurs within seconds or less.

More often than not, while analyzing risk, we are also trying to determine how much can we get away with.

If the speed limit is 50 we may be thinking about going 55, or 60, or more.

This is where the risk assessment comes into play.

We think about our choices and the likely consequences of each choice.

We remember never having seen radar or a law enforcement officer or there may be few vehicles on the road at the particular time.

The road surface may be dry, wet, icy snowy, smooth or bumpy.

We say to ourselves, I think I can get away with

this much or I am willing to take this big a chance.

When we come to a stop sign, we do the same.

We may not treat a stop sign in the middle of two rural roads the way we do in the center of town.

As such we may risk a rolling stop in one situation, but come to a full stop in another situation.

We are forever making choices based upon our risk analysis and assessment.

All of the above is normal human behavior.

Now, let's understand the difference between adult drivers and teen drivers.

Adults have many years of independent driving experience.

Adults probably have had a collision, driven in all seasons and in all driving conditions and on all kinds of roadways. Adults have witnessed collisions and their aftermath.

When adults drive, they base their risk analysis and assessment on many years of driving experience.

This is totally unlike a new teen driver.

New teen drivers do not have the wealth of experience on which to base their risk analysis and assessment.

As such they are more limited in both their range of choices for any given situation and their understanding of the consequences for any given choice.

We speak of lack of judgment when it comes to teen drivers.

Lack of judgment means that teens do not have the same depth of experience on which to base their assessment and as such they may make a less than adequate decision

given the absence of experience from which to draw.

When teens decide to take a risk, it is often greater than an adult would choose.

Teens fear less because of less experience. Teens have not witnessed many collisions, if any.

They have not seen the many consequences of crashes.

They are less likely to believe these things can happen to them.

Hence they are prone to taking greater risks based on less good judgment and are hurt more often.

Unfortunately, this lack of experience and lesser judgment is not recognized by the teen.

They cannot appreciate their lack of experience and as such will argue tooth and nail, that they are fully capable.

Teens have a marvelous capacity for language. They have just spent the past several years in high school and elementary school before that.

They are taught to argue their points and to assert themselves. They can certainly convince parents that they do know more than their actual experience has taught.

Parents often buy into this even though many know that no amount of intellectual learning can replace real life experience.

Parents think that because they trust their teen or because their teen is generally good or because the teen is convincing, that their teen

will exercise good judgment in the use of the car.

However, parents are cautioned to remember that their teen's good judgment just doesn't have the wealth of experience to back it up.

No matter how good or well-meaning the teen, they simply are not fully equipped for the responsibility and management of a motor vehicle under all circumstance.

This is well known to insurance companies and underscores the fact that young persons insurance rates do not decline substantially until about age 25.

Their statistics drive home the point that young drivers are at greater risk of crashing.

Insurance companies do not consider young persons experienced until about age 25 because their crash statistics show that this is when crashes start to significantly decline.

Parents may let the teen use the car, but the parent must still remain vigilant.

Aside from the first year of life, the first year of driving remains the most risk filled point in a young person's life.

Teen driver car crashes are the leading cause of permanent injury and death in teens and the first year of driving is the most dangerous.

Parents must talk with their teens and set limits and determine responsibilities, expectations and restrictions on the use of the car if they want to reduce the risk of their son or daughter's involvement in a crash.

Parents would do well to turn down the volume if their teen objects, just like they wouldn't listen to the objections from a three-year-old on touching the stove.

Parents do know better and it's not until the teen is over age 25 that they will truly understand or appreciate the actions taken by their parents.

This is the normal course of human development.

Several factors contribute to teen car crashes, injuries and fatalities.

They include driving after midnight, seatbelt use, number of passengers, intoxicants, fatigue and distractions.

Parents are well advised to restrict the number of passengers allowed in the vehicle.

Additional passengers may be allowed for each year of driving experience.

Parents must insist that their teen buckle-up and parents must do so too.

If your teen intends on being out after midnight, continue to give them a ride as you did before they got their license.

It is better to lose some sleep than pick your teen up at the hospital or morgue.

Go for a drive with your teen and discuss the use of the radio or car stereo. Turn it on and figure out an acceptable limit for the volume.

Lastly, don't let the tail wag the dog.

Many parents have difficulty setting limits with their teens.

Somehow or other some parents are hostage to the wining of their teen.

Some teens argue that they would rather not drive than have their parents restrictions or expectations and so the parents give in!

Don't give in.

Consider yourself lucky if your child won't drive because they don't like the rules.

This may actually be a safer option if they are demonstrating this kind of emotional immaturity.

If they try to blackmail you into using the car, this is a big signal to you that they do not yet possess the maturity to handle this privilege and responsibility.

Remember, your car, your rules.

Your responsibility as a parent continues to be the safety of your child until they are truly independent.