

Traffic Safety News

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80 State Highway 310, Suite 1, Canton NY 13617-1493
Phone: 315-379-2306: E-mail: mdavison@co.st-lawrence.ny.us

LATE FALL – EARLY
WINTER 2007

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HOLIDAY PARENTING TIPS



December is national drunk and drugged driving prevention month, a time when local communities join with the national 3d prevention month coalition to prevent driving under the influence of alcohol and other drugs. Celebrations with alcohol are prevalent during the holiday season, so it is important to think ahead to stop impaired driving in your neighborhood and keep your children safe. The Substance Abuse And Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers the following seasonal tips to help your family and your guests to arrive alive.

- Tell your child that you do not want her getting into a car with someone who has had even one drink or who has been using illegal drugs. Marijuana and other illegal drugs can impair driving ability. (Keep in mind that even some over-the-counter drugs and other medications can impair driving ability as well.)
- Help young people plan substance-free events. Visit <http://family.samhsa.gov/get/soberholiday.aspx> for details.
- If you host parties for young people, do not allow them to drink alcohol or use drugs. Do not serve alcohol, even to college students. Check on your young guests often to make sure that no one is sneaking alcohol or other illegal substances into your home. The legal consequences of allowing underage drinking and drug use in your home can be harsh, especially if a minor is injured or killed during the party or after leaving your house. Visit <http://family.samhsa.gov/set/prosecuting.aspx> for more information.
- Be a good role model. If you have been drinking, don't drive. We all know that young people learn by example—don't send mixed messages.
- Above all, tell your child that you want him to call you if he can't get a safe ride home from a party or other event. Stress to him that you want him to call even if he has been drinking or using drugs. Assure him that, while you do not support this behavior, his safety is your first concern. Wait a day or so, and then talk with him about what happened and what you expect from him in the future. Setting rules about safe riding and driving, especially when alcohol and drugs are involved, will help you make the roads safer for everyone.



Sobering Statistics

- Per mile driven, 16-year-old drivers have the highest rate of fatal crash involvement.
- In 2000, 2,339 youth died in alcohol-related crashes—accounting for more than one-third of all youth traffic deaths. That's enough kids to fill more than 58 school buses.
- More than 60 percent of youth alcohol-related crash deaths occurred in rural areas—on roads where traffic isn't heavy.



TIPS FOR SAFE WINTER WALKING



The same snow and ice that creates a winter wonderland can turn familiar territory into a hazardous landscape for pedestrians and motorists. Before you take a step onto that slippery sidewalk, consider these safety tips from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



- If the sidewalks and walkways are impassable and you have to walk in the street, walk against traffic and as close to the curb as you can.
- Proper gear is a must, but wearing dark "winter" colors can make it difficult for motorists to see you, even during daylight. Wear a brightly-colored scarf or hat or reflective gear, especially if you have to walk in the street. Don't forget gloves and footwear with non-slip soles.
- Carry a flashlight in your trunk to use in case of emergency. Use a flashlight when walking at night.
- Snow that has accumulated into drifts can muffle the sounds of approaching motor vehicles. Hats and scarves that cover your ears can muffle or even block these sounds. Keep warm, but dress so that you can hear what's going on around you.
- If you can, shop before the storm hits. If you must shop, don't buy more than you can easily carry. Remember— the sidewalks and streets are slippery and carrying heavy packages can impair your balance.
- When traveling with babies or small children, make sure they are dressed in brightly-colored or reflective clothing. If you have to push a stroller or walk in the street, the child should be in front of you and as close to the curb as possible.
- Snow and ice may keep motorists from stopping at traffic signals or slowing down for pedestrians. Before you step off of the curb into the street, make sure that any approaching vehicles have come to a complete stop.
- Bending your knees a little and taking slower steps can greatly reduce your chances of falling.
- Don't forget to be visible to passing cars when you are shoveling or using a snow blower.
- Joggers, don't forget that the law requires you to walk or run single file if you are in the roadway!

Rural Middle Schoolers Have Alarming Rate of Drinking and Driving

From Notable News, a publication of National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS), November 19, 2007 edition

Results of a survey of 290 middle-school students at a school in the Mississippi Delta reveal that 17 percent of the students have driven an automobile after drinking. The study, titled "Prevalence of Impaired Driving Behaviors in a Diverse, Rural, Southern Middle School," also found that, in the past month, 45 percent of the students rode with a driver who had been drinking.



In a press release, lead author Jessica Muilenburg of the University of Georgia College of Public Health states, "No one thought to look at risky driving behaviors in kids who weren't old enough to drive. We assume that because it's illegal for them to have a license that they don't drive - even though we know they're doing other illegal things such as drinking."

Dr. Muilenburg also said that early alcohol use and other risky behaviors tend to be more prevalent in rural areas because there is not as much to do outside of school. Rural youth also tend to be more familiar with motorized vehicles such as ATVs and farm equipment and have the opportunity to drive cars or trucks on family farms or back roads where they are not likely to be noticed.

Dr. Muilenburg hopes the findings will spur more research on and awareness of a dangerous behavior that until now has been overlooked. The study appears in the November issue of Accident Analysis & Prevention.