

# AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

# PROGRESS REPORT

VOLUME 4 • NUMBER 5

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1997

## IMPROPER STEERING CREATES PROBLEMS WITH ABS

Drivers of cars equipped with antilock brakes (ABS) need to practice emergency steering before they take to the road, urges the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

"A natural reaction when it looks like the car is about to hit something is to brake hard and jerk the wheel," says David Willis, President

of the Foundation. "But when your car has ABS, jerking the steering wheel while braking can get you into big trouble real quick."

That's because the car continues to respond to steering input when ABS is working. In tests conducted by the Foundation on August 26, jerking the wheel while braking hard sent the ABS-equipped car veering across the equivalent of two lanes. That's enough to send a car into opposing traffic or off the road completely.

Studies show that cars with ABS have fewer crashes with bicyclists, pedestrians, and other vehicles, but **more** crashes where the vehicle runs off the road or rolls over. "It's almost certainly caused by drivers reflexively jerking the wheel," Willis says. "The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration put drivers in simulators and found that in an emergency many drivers jam on the brakes and steer violently. That's just the behavior that causes problems with ABS."

Drivers who have ABS in their cars should not become alarmed, Willis cautions. "The key is practice," he says. "Antilock brakes can be lifesavers and are very effective when you use them correctly. We urge drivers to take their cars out to a safe, open parking lot with no obstructions, accelerate to 35 or 40 miles an hour, and brake hard. Knowing how the car will respond in an emergency can prevent panic steering."

To find out if your car has ABS, look for an "ABS" symbol on your dash when you turn on the ignition. Then take the time to practice



emergency braking **before** you have an emergency. "Find an empty parking lot and jam on the brakes a few times to get the feel of ABS," Willis says. "If you know what's happening, you won't panic."

## TEEN DRIVERS CRASH MORE, AND CRASH DIFFERENTLY

Novice drivers have high crash rates — that's no secret. National Safety Council data shows that in 1996 drivers between 16 and 17 years old had an average of 33 police-reported crashes per 100. That's more than three times the rest of the population. On a per-mile basis the crash involvement rate looks even worse: 16-year-olds crash 20 times more than the average for all drivers.

But teens not only crash more than other drivers. Their crashes also differ when compared with those of the average driver. Christopher Johnson, the Foundation's research analyst, looked at reports of fatal crashes and isolated certain areas where teen drivers tragically stand out.

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*Jerking the wheel while using antilock brakes in an emergency can send a car swerving violently out of its lane (left). With conventional brakes (right) the wheels lock up and the car skids into the object ahead of it. Drivers with antilock brakes should practice emergency braking and steering **before** they have a real emergency.*

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## TEEN DRIVERS—from page 1

Teens are over-represented in crashes caused by certain behaviors:

- **Driving too fast:** Teens are over-represented in crashes at every speed greater than 41 miles per hour. Last year 418 16-and 17-year-old drivers were killed at speeds over 75 mph.
- **Driver inattention:** Teens are over-represented at intersections with stop, warning, or yield signs.
- **Overcorrecting and running off the road:** Teens have more crashes where the vehicle leaves the road, and also have more crashes on wet roads than other drivers.
- **Reckless driving, passing with insufficient distance or in a prohibited passing zone, and passing on the right:** Teens are more likely to be charged with moving, speeding, and reckless driving violations than other drivers involved in fatal crashes.
- **Colliding with an animal:** Speeding at night means that by the time a teen sees a deer in the headlights, there's not much the driver can do about it.

What makes these crashes especially tragic is that teens are twice as likely to have other people in the car at the time of the crash, and wear their seat belts less than half the time. The result: More injuries and fatalities per crash when a teen is driving.

"These situations are exactly the kinds of problems teens can learn to avoid in the Foundation's new *driver-ZED* CD-ROM," Johnson says. "Graduated licensing programs around the country will also ease teens into driving and can help stem this epidemic."

## "ROAD RAGE" BROCHURE AVAILABLE

An eight-page brochure explaining how motorists can protect themselves against aggressive drivers is at the printer and will be available in mid-November. Priced at 12 cents each, the brochures offer advice on how to avoid "road rage" situations: Don't offend, don't engage, and adjust your attitude.

For example, the behavior other motorists dislike the most is being cut off. Drivers can

avoid conflict by using turn signals, allowing plenty of room to merge, and by letting an impatient driver go ahead of them.

"We've had a lot of requests for information on aggressive driving," says David Willis, president of the Foundation. "This brochure will help drivers avoid conflict and even become calmer drivers themselves."

To order "Road Rage," see "How to Order" on page 4.

## PRAISE FOR "WINTER"

Winter's on the way, and "Ready... Set... Winter!" has helped hundreds of Massachusetts postal employees prepare for those famous New England snows. Bill Schmidlin, a Driver Instructor Examiner for the U.S. Postal Service in North Reading, requested 155 of the videos to show letter carriers.

Schmidlin wrote, "I have recently received a copy of the video "Ready...Set...Winter!" As a Driving Instructor for the Postal Service I have to say it is one of the best winter driving videos that I have seen." Schmidlin's manager was so impressed with the video he ordered copies for each of the associate offices. "We are sure this video will help our letter carriers in their winter driving and help in reducing the number of winter accidents," Schmidlin says. "We also feel the video will help all our employees when driving this winter."

**Progress Report** is issued every other month by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, a not-for-profit, publicly-supported charitable educational and research organization. Visit our web site at <http://www.aaafoundation.org>

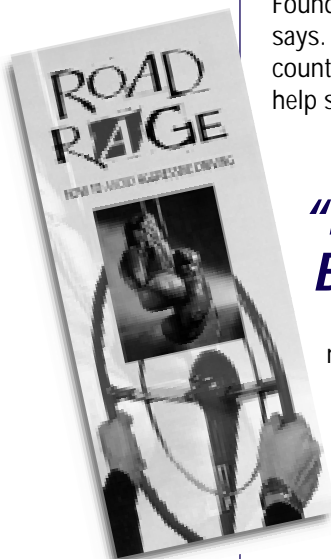
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## HOW DO DRIVERS SAY THEY'RE SORRY?

Results are in from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's "How Do You Say You're Sorry?" contest on the World Wide Web. The contest, which ran from August 28th to September 30th, drew more than 5,000 visitors and 160 entries from as far away as Australia and South Africa to the Foundation's web site — <http://www.aaafoundation.org>.

Most drivers apologize by giving themselves a whack in the head, according to survey responses. Twenty percent offered this as a suitable apologetic gesture, described as "hitting yourself upside the head" or "I could've had a V-8!"

Other popular responses included waving a hand, raising a hand, shrugging shoulders (often combined with a smile or raising the arms in an "I couldn't help it" gesture), mouthing the words "I'm sorry!" so the other driver can see, and making a "V" like the peace sign.

Several people pointed out that American Sign Language, a language used by the Deaf, has a word for "I'm sorry" — rotating a fist over the heart. However, in a car it is possible the other driver would not see this sign.

One suggestion the Foundation does not recommend is flashing the hazard lights. Hazard lights are used to signal emergencies, and should be reserved for that purpose.

To learn more about the contest and responses, visit the Foundation's page at <http://www.aaafoundation.org>. You can also browse the product catalogue and place secure credit card orders from the site.

## DRIVER-ZED IN FINAL TESTING

The *driver-ZED* teen risk management program has reached dress rehearsal stage, known in computer-speak as a "beta test." A nearly final version of the program has been sent to ten locations across the United States and in Canada for testing by real novice drivers.

High school students who test *driver-ZED* will first use the program, going through as many of the scenarios as possible. They'll then complete a 36-item survey, including questions about how the program worked, whether it was easy to use,

and how the teen felt about the experience. They'll be asked opinions about specific issues the program teaches: For example, questionnaire respondents have the opportunity to agree or disagree with statements like "I will pay more attention to what's in my mirrors because of this program."



A demonstration of *driver-ZED* at the Community Traffic Safety Program Awards Luncheon, sponsored by the Automobile Club of New York, was hugely successful. More than 180 people swarmed around the *driver-ZED* computer, trying out the program and asking questions of Foundation president David Willis and research analyst Christopher Johnson. The Foundation is donating the computer to the Auto Club of New York to test *driver-ZED* locally. "They were all really excited about the program," says Johnson. "We barely made the flight back to Washington — they didn't want to let us leave."

*The Foundation's driver-ZED program attracted a lot of interest at a press conference about graduated licensing and teen driving, held September 23 at the National Press Club.*

## SCHOOL BUS VIDEOS SHOW "SAFEST WAY OUT"

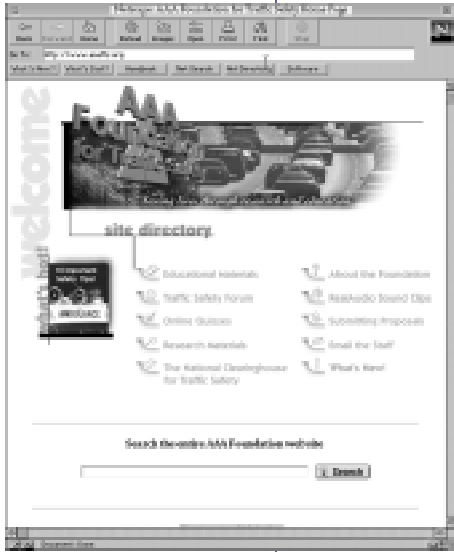
A new training video shows students how to get out of a school bus without getting into trouble. "The Safest Way Out: Emergency School Bus Evacuation" is now available in three versions: a general education version for students, a general version for drivers, and a version for drivers of special education buses.

The generic videos for children and drivers



*"The Safest Way Out" teaches kids how to leave a bus quickly by the nearest exit, whichever that may be.*

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## HOW TO ORDER

To receive materials from the Foundation, order by phone at 1-800-305-SAFE. You can also fax your order to 202/638-5943 or send an order by mail to The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Suite 201, 1440 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Users of the World Wide Web can place their orders at the Foundation's home page, <http://www.aaafoundation.org>. A special billing system allows secure electronic processing of credit card orders over the internet.

Please note that to cover increased costs the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is raising shipping charges to \$7.50 per order.

## "SAFEST WAY OUT" –from page 3

demonstrate how to use modern bus safety features, like roof exits and emergency windows, along with procedures for moving the students quickly and in an orderly way. The version for drivers who carry special-needs children explains how to release wheelchairs, how to lift children who cannot move themselves, and how to guide children with vision and hearing impairments.

The videos cost \$40 each, but all three can be purchased together for a special discounted price of \$100. (Prices do not include the new \$7.50 shipping and handling fee.)

"The safest way you can travel in this country is a school bus," says Christopher Johnson, who produced the video. "But it's still important for kids to know what to do when emergencies do happen."

To order "The Safest Way Out," see "How to Order" at left.

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