

PROGRESS REPORT

TEENS NEED MORE SLEEP, EXPERTS SAY

"Almost all high school and college students do not get enough sleep," states Dr. William C. Dement, director of the Sleep Disorders Center at Stanford University. "They are at risk for a number of serious consequences, including poor performance at school, increased incidence of automobile accidents, increased moodiness, and increased use of stimulants and alcohol."

A recent National Academy of Sciences forum, entitled *The Sleep Needs, Patterns, and Difficulties of Adolescents*, looked at teenagers' sleep patterns and found that the nation's teenagers are tired, tired, tired. While teens need around 8 to 9¼ hours of sleep per night, surveys show that during the week high school students actually get an average of 7 hours, and 26 percent sleep 6 hours or less per night. Teens have a natural biological clock that makes it difficult for them to go to bed before 11:00 p.m. The result is that they stay up late, get up early, and walk around sleepy all day.

The consequences of teen sleeplessness can be serious. A paper from the National Sleep Foundation observed that sleep deprivation causes increased risk of unintentional injuries and death. Lack of adequate sleep slows reaction time, causes lapses in attention, and exacerbates emotional and behavioral problems. Keeping different sleep schedules on weekends, as many teens do, can also cause fragmented sleep and make it harder for teens to fall asleep at their regular time.

To help teens get enough sleep, experts at the forum recommended later school starting times for high schools and shorter working hours after school. Setting and keeping consistent sleep schedules — going to bed and getting up at about

the same time every day—are also important to maintaining mental alertness, the experts say.

Parents in particular should remember that teenagers and young adults from 16 to 25, especially males, have the highest risk for drowsy driving crashes. Such crashes are not related to the teen's overall driving ability or driving record. In one well-known and tragic case, Michael Doucette was named the country's safest teen driver in 1989 and received use of a Dodge Shadow for a year. In February of 1990 he fell asleep at the wheel and drifted across the center line, killing himself and the driver of an oncoming car.



GRANDPARENTS! BUCKLE THOSE KIDS!

Are your children safe when they ride with their grandparents? An independent nationwide poll on child passenger safety reveals that 21 percent of grandparents — one in five — say they "never" use a child safety seat when they have their grandchildren as passengers. The poll, commissioned by automaker Nissan North America, Inc., was released in early September.

The poll brings to light the fact that child safety awareness is more than just a parent issue. Studies indicate more than 5 million grandparents in the United States serve as primary child care providers, usually for their working children. In fact, 40 percent of grandparents reported that their grandchildren rode with them an average of three or more times per month.

This makes the lack of safety seats particularly troubling. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, properly installed child safety seats can reduce the risk of crash

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BUCKLE THOSE KIDS! (continued)

death by 69 percent for infants and 47 percent for toddlers.

An earlier child safety seat survey conducted by Nissan asked parents of children aged six and under about their safety seat use. Just 12 percent of parents said they never used a safety seat—still too many, but better than their elders.

"Many advances have been made in the car seat safety arena since grandparents, and even their own children, were little," says Stephanie Tombrello, executive director of SafetyBelt-SafeUSA. "That's why it's more important than ever for grandparents to be properly informed on child seat safety, in order to help safeguard today's children in the car."

CALIFORNIA LOVES "CHILDREN"

"Since September is back-to-school month, we were looking for a way to get our message to the public, that it's important for drivers to be careful when children are out and about," says Paul Moreno, Public Affairs Representative, California State Automobile Association (CSAA). "We thought *Children in Traffic* contained a lot of good traffic safety information and practical, easy-to-understand safety tips. It's new, which also made a good news angle."

Moreno approached television stations in Nevada, which is part of the CSAA club territory. "We had very good success in Nevada," Moreno says. Four television stations carried the story, including an early-morning appearance on a morning news show by CSAA Vice President Don Patton and an appearance by lobbyist Rich Shrader on a mid-day show in Sacramento. Moreno has also appeared on radio and television stations in San Francisco and Sacramento, including several Spanish-language stations, and Rolayne Fairclough of AAA Utah discussed the video on a radio news service that fed 30 Utah stations.

Moreno's strategy for getting the *Children in Traffic* safety information to the news media was simple: "We did a news release and in it we talked about child safety," he says. "We used bullet points pointing out why kids behave differently in traffic and why they often act unpredictably. We also offered tips for drivers and boiled the message down to the main points." The easy-to-use

format and clear information made the story a natural for most stations, Moreno says.

Some stations wouldn't play scenes from the tape because it was only available in VHS format. (Television stations use a higher resolution format for broadcasting, called Beta-SP.) Several others were able to use it, Moreno says.

"One station, in Sacramento, showed several segments of the tape during a live question-and-answer session with CSAA," Moreno says. Other stations ran the story but didn't broadcast scenes from the tape. However, Moreno explains, "They were very responsive to having people come on the air live."

"The public needs to know more about how children behave," Moreno says, and *Children in Traffic* explains their differences. "When I spoke with reporters a lot of them had just never thought about the concept that children are not little adults, they do hear and see differently. The reasons kids behave unpredictably were very clearly explained in the video. It was a real eye-opener for a lot of people," he says.

NEW RESEARCH CONTRACTS AWARDED

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has awarded two new research contracts in September. The first went to the Highway Safety Research Center at the University of North Carolina (HSRC), Chapel Hill, for the largest research undertaking ever sponsored by the Foundation. This 18-month project will analyze the highway



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risks posed by distracted drivers. The project's Principal Investigator is Jane C. Stutts, Ph.D., HSRC's Manager of Epidemiological Studies. Teamed with HSRC is The Scientex Corporation, Arlington, VA, which will be handling the in-vehicle monitoring phase of the research. The Director of the Transportation Safety Division at Scientex, Loren Staplin, Ph.D., will head the Scientex team.

The second contract went to the Texas Transportation Institute, Texas A&M University System, for a 10-month project to evaluate the present state of the art for heavy truck splash and spray suppression. The project's Principal Investigator will be Michael P. Manser, Ph.D. The research team also includes Rodger J. Koppa, Ph.D., PE, and Richard A. Zimmer, who were involved in previous splash and spray suppression tests sponsored by the former Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association in the late 1980s.

ARE PICKUP DRIVERS DIFFERENT?

Pickup truck owners are more likely to drink a beverage while driving than are automobile owners, but they're also less likely to change lanes frequently, a recent study reports. The study, published in *Accident Analysis and Prevention* magazine by Dr. Craig Anderson, Dr. Diane Winn, and Dr. Phyllis Agran, examined differences between pickup truck owners and car owners.

The study found that nearly all other differences between pickup truck owners and car owners are attributable to differences in age and gender. While pickup trucks do have higher crash and fatality rates than automobiles, that difference is caused by driver demographics, not some unique trait of pickup truck owners or a problem with the vehicles themselves. In other words, the reason pickup trucks are high-risk vehicles is that they're more often driven by young adult males, a high-risk population.

There are a few other differences. Pickup truck owners are less likely to have gone to college than car owners, but are more likely to have high incomes. Pickup truck owners are also more likely than car owners to be married. Maybe country musician Joe Diffie was right when he sang, "There's something women like about a pickup man."

driver-ZED TEACHES TEENS AT "SAFE DRIVING DAY"

Driver-ZED traveled to York, Pennsylvania to teach high school students about safe driving.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety joined with MADD, the Pennsylvania State Police, Tell Dad (an organization that gives out "How's my driving?" bumper stickers for teens), Saturn of York, and Christa Craig's Drive Right Driving Instruction to sponsor Teen Safe Driving Day. The safety fair, held October 9 at the Saturn showroom, helped



parents and teens gather safety information and learn about the responsibilities of driving.

Christa Craig's Drive Right Driving Instruction of Airville, PA sponsored the event that brought interested parents and teens out to on a Saturday afternoon.

"I thought it would be a great way to help teens understand the importance of driving safely. I also felt something like this was needed in the community," said Christa Craig.

Participating organizations offered food, t-shirts, prizes, drawings, and a live band that really rocked. Booths set up at the dealership offered information about drinking and driving, road rage, and safe driving techniques.

The AAA Foundation exhibit of driver-ZED, the CD-ROM for teen drivers, attracted teen participants eager to try its computerized version of real-life driving problems. (It's available on line at www.driverzed.org.) Reactions showed that even parents could use a little refreshing of their skills.

"After trying out a few scenes on the laptop, two boys couldn't be pulled away from the program," says Joshua Poole, who exhibited the program for the Foundation. "They were on it for nearly 20 minutes going through each of the different modes. It was great to see them getting excited about driving safely. After they crashed once, one teen turned to the other and said 'come on now, we've got to get this next one right.' The program really seems to hold their attention."

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“SAFE DRIVING DAY” (continued)

When Craig planned the event she specifically wanted driver-ZED to be present.. “I heard about ZED on a local TV station (WGAL 8 from Lancaster). The Lancaster AAA was on the 12:30 Live show with the CD, it looked really great, so I checked it out on the web and ordered one for myself,” she says.

“I am working on having another Safe Driving Day with even more participation and hands-on events,” she added enthusiastically.

WHY DRIVERS RUN LIGHTS

“Frustration doesn’t seem to play a large role in red light running,” explains Dr. Bryan Porter, Professor of Psychology at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. Dr. Porter recently surveyed 5,024 drivers over 18 about their driving behavior. “In psychology there’s the frustration-aggression hypothesis; frustration often leads to aggressive driving behavior. The problem is, in our survey when drivers were frustrated they were more likely to do other things—speed, tailgate, weave, gesture angrily—than they were to red light run.”

The main reason drivers run through the red, Porter says, is impatience. More than half of those surveyed, 56 percent, said they run red

lights at least occasionally. The reason given most often was impatience, followed by the thrill of beating the light. Only 16 percent mentioned frustration or anger as factors. Nearly all drivers—98 percent—also know such behavior is dangerous.

Though there is no typical red-light runner, Porter says those who go through lights tend to be younger, be driving alone, have no children, and rushing to get to work or school on weekday mornings. “We asked the likelihood of running a red light with a passenger in the car,” Porter said. He found that an adult driving alone has the highest risk, followed by an adult with an adult passenger. The lowest risk was an adult with a child passenger. “Put a kid in our car, we change quite a bit,” Porter says.

When respondents were asked what would work to reduce red-light running, Porter says, “the number one response was increased enforcement of some type, increasing fines, increased police presence, photo technology. Number two was education.” Porter advocates increased consequences for red-light running. “What drivers perceive immediately is that ‘I’m going to run a red and I’m not going to get caught.’ They also perceive they won’t get hurt, which is an unfortunate perception. So their consequences are, ‘I feel like I save time, I get away with it, nobody tells me it’s wrong, and it’s socially acceptable.’ You have to make the consequences immediate and more severe.”

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