

# The Most Dangerous Times for Kids to Drive

Wednesday, December 6th, 2006

Emily Halevy | CWK Producer

***“One passenger...increases the risk. Two, you know, triples the risk. Three or more passengers is a party. And so limiting the number of passengers is a big step in making that a safer vehicle.”***

– Robert Wilson, National Safety Council

Over a million wrecks a year, and over 8,000 deaths from crashes involving young drivers. When is the most dangerous time for teens to be out on the road? At night? On weekends?

Guess again. For teens, the deadliest time on the road is after school.

"We were coming home from school," remembers 17-year-old Masha Malikina. "And there was five of us [in the car], and I was sitting in the backseat - in the middle."

Masha remembers another car pulling up next to them, "and the driver of the other car started speeding up and slowing down, which kind of meant that he wanted to race.

She'll never forget that day, when the driver of her car took up the challenge. "And we yelled at him, 'no'," she says, "and he didn't listen to us and he tried to do it anyways - and he went into the turning lane to try to go around this guy, and then lost control of the car. And we ran off the road and hit a bunch of trees."

One passenger died from his injuries. Masha is paralyzed from the waist down.

"I constantly have dreams of walking - and waking up in the morning thinking I can walk, and realizing that you can't," she says.

A study by the American Automobile Association found that more teens die in car wrecks in the afternoon - from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm - than any other time of the day...or night.

"The kids are driving after sitting all day, they're cooped-up, they're ready to get some excitement, and it translates into trouble," explains Robert Wilson with the National Safety Council.

Why are the hours after school so dangerous?

"More times than not, it's the other teenage passengers that are the problem," says Wilson. "And so limiting the number of passengers is a big step in making that a safer vehicle."

He says the best way to keep your teens safe is don't let them drive until you're sure they're ready.

"It's a parent's responsibility to know how their teen is driving," he says, "and to put in the proper restrictions until they have adequate experience and maturity."

Masha's doctors said she'd never walk again, but she didn't believe them.

She was able to accept her high school diploma on foot - to a standing ovation. During her speech she told the crowd, "Never let anybody tell you - you can't do something, 'cause it's all up to you."

## Tips for Parents

- **Don't rely solely on driver education. High school driving courses may be the most convenient way to teach driving skills, but they don't produce safer drivers. (Institute for Highway Safety)**
- **Supervise your child's practice driving. Take an active role in helping your teen learn how to drive. Supervised practice should be spread over at least six months - and continue even after your teen graduates from a learner's permit to a restricted or full license. (Institute for Highway Safety)**
- **Restrict passengers. Teenage passengers in a vehicle can distract a new driver and/or lead to greater risk-taking. The best policy is to restrict the number of teenage passengers your teen is allowed to transport. (National Safety Council)**
- **Require safety belts. Don't assume that your teen is using a safety belt when they are with their friends, just because he or she uses it when you're together. Research shows that safety belt use is lower among teens than older people. Insist that your teen use a safety belt at all times. (Institute for Highway Safety)**
- **Prohibit driving after drinking. Make it clear that it is illegal and highly dangerous for a teen to drive after drinking alcohol or using any other drug. (National Safety Council)**
- **Motor vehicle crashes are the number-one killer of teens. This shocking reality is due mostly to two factors—driver inexperience and maturity level behind the wheel. (American Automobile Association)**

## References

- National Safety Council
- American Automobile Association