



'Danger season' for teen drivers

PROM, GRADUATION

More than one-third of the year's alcohol-related teen traffic fatalities occur around prom and graduation time. Not only are teens more likely to imbibe then, but they're driving in challenging circumstances. Nerves and excitement, running late to pick up a date, showing off for friends in the car, lack of sleep, or even wearing stiff-soled dress shoes or binding garb can tip the scales against inexperienced drivers.

Use extra caution when traveling on prom or graduation night in your community. If you have teens in your household, heed these tips to help ensure a safe night for everyone:

- **Leave the car at home.** Prom is all about glamour – and what could be more glamorous than arriving and departing in a limousine? Teens can easily split the cost with other couples. Or, parents can literally don a chauffeur's cap themselves. (Hint: Skip the minivan and rent a classy convertible or luxury car, instead!)
- **Limit passengers if teens must drive themselves** – no more than one other couple, and be back by midnight. Teen crashes skyrocket on prom nights between midnight and 6 a.m. Important reminder: For the first six months the driver is licensed, Washington and Oregon's graduated licensing laws prohibit them from being on the road between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. (Washington) and midnight and 5 a.m. (Oregon), and having passengers under age 20, except for immediate family.
- **Give your teen an escape plan.** Even responsible kids can mess up. Make sure your teen understands that – no matter what – he or she can call you for a ride home. Reserve questions for a time when you're both clear-headed. If teens inadvertently climb in a car with a drunk driver, they can use this trick to get out: At a safe place, tell the driver to pull over because "I'm going to be sick." Once outside, your child can urge the driver to go on without him or her and call home for a ride.
- **Work with your school, PTA, and local merchants to host a "Prom 'til Dawn" celebration.** After the last dance, give kids an alternative to unchaperoned, alcohol-fueled parties by offering free food and entertainment like games, contests, karaoke, magicians, and caricaturists. Hold a grand-prize drawing for revelers who stay all night.

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