

## How to avoid intoxicated drivers?

By Captain Ed Bailey

You could stay in bed, curl up with a good book and never venture onto the roads. But assuming you have to drive somewhere sometime probably every day, how can you protect yourself and your family against intoxicated and otherwise impaired drivers?

While no method is foolproof these sensible tips could help save your life.

- **If the impaired driver is ahead of you:** Maintain an extra-safe following distance (good advice when behind any driver). Resist the temptation to pass the driver may not see you and suddenly swerve into your path.
- **If the impaired driver is behind you:** Turn right at the first opportunity or get off the road and let the probably impatient driver pass. The driver may be speeding to an accident. Get out of the way!
- **If the impaired driver is approaching you:** Slow down and drive to the right. Get off the road drive up a bank if you must. A bent axle is better than a bent leg.
- **When approaching an intersection:** Slow down and look both ways as you near the corner. Be ready to take action.

In some situations, you can warn other drivers of a menace by flashing your headlights and blowing your horn. You can also be a good citizen by reporting a suspected impaired driver to the police as soon as possible. Your action may save lives.

All of us can do our part to keep impaired drivers off the road in the first place. Never let a friend who has "had too much" get behind the wheel. Hide the car keys! Your alive friend will thank you in the morning.

Another positive step: Support well-known campaigns against drunk driving. Thanks to the efforts of M.A.D.D., the insurance industry and others, fatalities due to impaired driving have dropped encouragingly in the past few years.

Despite precautions, though, not all encounters with impaired drivers can be avoided. So wear your safety belt! Most state laws require it. Statistics confirm that buckling up really does save lives.

## What is the leading killer of teenagers?

More than 5,000 teenagers of driving age die in motor vehicle crashes each year, making the car the #1 killer of teenagers. Car crashes kill more teenagers than cancer and all other diseases combined.

What situations are leading to so many deaths? The insurance institute for Highway Safety suggests two:

- **Drinking and driving** Teenagers are inexperienced at both drinking and driving, so small amounts of alcohol can have tragic effects. For example, teenage drivers with blood alcohol concentrations of 0.05 % up to 0.10 % are far more likely than sober teen drivers to be killed in single-vehicle crashes. And, more than 30 % of all fatally injured teenage drivers have a blood alcohol concentration above 0.10, the legal limit in most states. Kentucky has a Zero Tolerance for persons under the age of 21 to have alcohol in their system. One alcoholic drink for these people could end up in a DUI arrest and conviction. Kentucky lowered the legal limit to 0.08 %.
- **Night driving** About half of all fatal motor vehicle crashes involving teens occur between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. especially on weekends. Male drivers 16-19 years old are involved in about four times as many nighttime fatal crashes as men 30-54 years old.

### How can we reduce the number of teenage traffic deaths?

- **Be a good role model** A teenager's driving habits are developed long before he or she sits behind the wheel.
- **Choose safe cars for young drivers.** Large cars are generally safer than small cars. Safety features make sense, too.
- **Practice with your young driver** Give your teen plenty of supervised driving time during the learning process, even after they get their license.
- **Discourage nighttime driving** Many states have curfews for teen drivers.
- **Enforce no drinking-and-driving rules** Make an agreement with your teen to call home for a ride if a potential drunk-driving situation develops. In return, you promise to get your teenager home with no questions asked.

To learn more, ask your independent insurance agent for a brochure on teenage drivers.

## **What is a safe following distance?**

While driving down the road, stop to notice the space between your car and the one in front of you. Do you think you're following the car in front of you too closely? With the "two second rule," you can find out instantly whether you're at a safe distance or if you're too close.

As you're driving, pick out a stationary object the vehicle in front of you has just passed a telephone pole, a road sign or a mailbox. As soon as the vehicle completely clears the object, start counting "one thousand and one, one thousand and two."

This should take about two seconds. If you reach the object before you finish counting, you're following too closely if you reach the object after that, you're allowing a safe following distance.

Add at least another second if you're driving in bad weather or on slippery surfaces.

Another good method for determining if you're too close is to look at your speed, and allow one average car length for every 10 miles per hour. For example, if you are traveling at 40 miles per hour, you should be able to fit 4 cars in between you and the driver in front of you. If you cannot, then you should increase the distance between you and the driver in front of you.

You never know when the driver in front of you has to take evasive action or stop. Please leave a comfortable cushion for your safety and the safety of other motorists.