

A Safe-Driving Prom Night

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of teen fatalities, accounting for 75 percent of all unintentional teen deaths. Every day, almost nine drivers ages 15 to 20 are killed in crashes and another 690 are injured. During prom and graduation season, teens may be at greater risk of crashes related to impaired driving. Nighttime driving plus the excitement of the prom and graduation can be a dangerous mix.

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), [death rates are three times greater](#) during nighttime driving than during the day. When you drive at night, your vision is limited and your depth perception, color perception, and peripheral vision are not as acute. Objects may not be as clear, and glare from lights may interfere with vision.

Not surprisingly, alcohol is a major contributor to nighttime accidents. Eighteen percent of young drivers killed are impaired by alcohol. Every year more than 1,000 teens lose their lives because they were alcohol impaired. Parents should enforce a zero-tolerance policy for alcohol because it's law – and also because it decreases teens' likelihood of crashing.

The following are some tips for a safe-driving prom night:

For teens:

- Always wear your seatbelt and make sure everyone in the car does too.
- Concentrate and drive defensively. There are likely to be a lot of distracted drivers on the road on prom night.
- Have directions to the dance – even drive by the location during daylight hours – if the prom is not held at your school, so you know where you're going.
- Understand that the average vehicle weighs 3,000 pounds. It may be easy to drive, but it's still a heavy piece of machinery.
- Never allow someone who has been drinking to drive, no matter how confident the driver is about his or her abilities. It's not worth the risk.
- Remember that tired drivers are dangerous. If you're barely awake, you shouldn't be behind the wheel.
- If you find yourself in an emergency situation, call home to get a ride. No matter what time it is, parents would rather pick you up than have you drive in a dangerous situation.

- Take your cell phone to prom so you have one in case of an emergency.
- Take a spare pair of comfortable shoes with you for driving so you don't have to hit the brakes while wearing unfamiliar high heels or bulky dress shoes.

And for parents:

- Make sure you know where your child is going to be during the dance and at the after-prom parties.
- Don't allow too many prom-goers into one vehicle. (More passengers means more distractions.)
- Consider a limo or an adult driver to chauffeur students. This should be someone who has more experience driving at night and who is not distracted with prom-night excitement.
- Work with your teen to establish driving rules and penalties for failure to obey them.
- Know the location, time and most of all of the events your teen attends.
- Set time limits for travel after the party.
- For prom, communicate with the school to determine whether students can freely leave and return to the event, and if a chaperone will be on duty to spot alcohol.

Thanks to:

National Safety Council <http://www.nsc.org>

Nationwide Insurance: <http://www.nationwide.com/about-us/prom-tips.jsp>

MORE INFORMATION . . .

If you have car trouble at night, pull off the road as far as possible. Warn approaching traffic at once by setting up reflecting triangles near your vehicle and 300 feet behind it. Turn on flashers and the dome light. Stay off the roadway and get passengers away from the area.

If there is any doubt, turn your headlights on. Lights will not help you see better in early twilight, but they'll make it easier for other drivers to see you. Being seen is as important as seeing.