

THE FATAL FOUR



Drink & Drugs

Mobile Phones

Speeding

NO Seatbelts

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Supplement No. 9

Young Drivers: The Causes and Effects

There can be no arguing with statistics that consistently show young drivers to be more at risk than any other motorist.

The question is why?

- Scientific fact that the part of the brain that controls emotion, judgement and decision making – the frontal lobe region to be precise – does not fully develop until around the age of 25
- Young adults tend to be more impulsive and prone to taking risks, as well as being easily influenced by others around them
- They also find it difficult to access the road ahead, anticipate hazards and judge the level of danger they could be in when confronted by unfamiliar driving situations

It's important to understand how a cocktail of inexperience and immaturity can all too quickly lead to our sons and daughters making common mistakes that account for the vast majority of motoring offences and collisions involving young drivers. These include:

- **Speeding**

Too many young drivers – especially testosterone fuelled young men – see this new found freedom of the road as a licence to test their car and driving skills by putting their foot down without regard to speed limits, most typically in town areas, at night and when overtaking. However, excessive speed isn't the only problem. Even sticking to the posted speed limit can still be driving too fast in busy pedestrian streets, in unsuitable weather conditions or on country roads.

- **Influence Of Others**

Showing off in front of friends is a major cause of risky behaviour among young drivers. Extensive research has revealed that the behaviour of young drivers changes significantly when they have one or more friends with them in the car. The risk of a fatal collision is also greatly increased when young male drivers transport other male passengers of the same aged group. The more passengers being carried, the greater the likelihood of being involved in a crash.

- **Failure To Look Properly**

This is by far the greatest cause of collisions involving young drivers. Not looking properly in reality means not seeing and recognising the potential dangers properly in such situations as pulling out from a junction or joining the flow of traffic on a round about. Inexperience can also result in lack of awareness of surrounding traffic, especially cyclists and motorcyclists, with the tendency to remain fixed on the road ahead rather than regularly checking mirrors to see what might be coming up behind or alongside.

- **Loss Of Control**

Newly qualified young drivers are much more likely to be involved in "loss of control" crashes than other motorists. This is due to a combination of inexperience and immaturity, specifically in relation to judgement, hazard assessment and vehicle handling. Loss of control is the most common factor single vehicle crashes – usually involving young male drivers and typically occurring on bends as a result of inappropriate speed and or gear selection. Single vehicle crashes are less common among young females, they are more likely to be involved in a collision with another vehicle after losing control in slippery driving conditions.

- **Overloading**

Although it's only natural for newly qualified drivers to celebrate gaining a full licence by carrying friends around, the problem comes when too many of them are in the car at once! Fully loading the car is a major cause of loss of control among new drivers as it has a serious effect on steering and the general handling of the car, particularly when breaking or cornering.

- **Distractions**

Young drivers often overestimate their ability to control the car and think it is perfectly okay to multi-task when behind the wheel. Dangerous distractions which can divert a young driver's attention most commonly include talking, dialling or texting on a mobile phone, applying make-up, eating or drinking, smoking, talking to passengers, playing music too loud. The style of music can also impact on the young driver behaviour, for example, a high energy rock or dance track can make them drive faster without realising it.