



"These Keys Come With Strings Attached"

Amador Teen Driver Council

PO Box 1807, Jackson, CA 95642

www.amadorteendriver.org

Check us out on the web:
amadorteendriver.org

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Monitoring your Teen Driver, *Mason Gregorius Argonaut High*

Many parents are now becoming increasingly apprehensive about their teens driving. It was out of this concern that many parents have asked the question, "Is there a way to track my child's driving?". The answer is yes. There are many technologies now-a-days that allow teen parents to keep an eye out for their kids, ranging from low-tech methods to some advanced tracking devices.

A couple of low-tech options that some parents have resorted to include simply tracking the distance your teen has traveled via the odometer and by placing a bumper sticker on the back of their teen's vehicle. All a parent needs to know is the distance that their child should be driving during the day and they can simply do the math to discover whether their child has gone farther than he or she was supposed to. The other low-tech option is a simple bumper sticker. Some organizations

such as "Report My Teen", offer a service so that if anyone calls regarding the child's driving, the message will be automatically forwarded to the parent's cell phone. The obvious downside to this method is prank calls.

Some high-tech monitoring devices

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such as a teen's cell phone, a "Black Box", DriveCams allow parents to track their kids with much more accuracy. A teen's cell phone can easily be turned into a tracking device by a trip to a cell phone dealer. Teens' cell phones can also be equipped with GPS to keep them under the watchful eye of the satellites. Parent's can easily log online to follow a vehicle's position and speed.

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ANOTHER WEEK—ANOTHER TRAGEDY: *John Sullivan, Law offices of John A. Sullivan, Pine Grove, CA*

Hardly a week goes by without still another headline in the *Ledger Dispatch* about a serious automobile accident involving juveniles.

Unfortunately the articles following the headline only discuss the physical injuries that occur. Many times a real part of the tragedy is the financial hardship that can follow the negligent driver, and perhaps the driver's family, for years to come. Of course the newspaper cannot be

expected to know the financial cost of the injuries to the victims nor whether the driver carried sufficient insurance to protect against the loss.

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While there are statutes on the books that MAY minimize the legal obligations of the parents where the negligent driver is a minor, the driver is not similarly protected.

The driver is exposed to unlimited amounts of damages for the economic loss to the victims for medical expenses, lost wages, etc. PLUS pain and suffering damages. Serious injuries

requiring hospitalization will almost always exceed minimum statutory limits and can easily exceed even enhanced limits of \$100,000 per person, \$300,000 per occurrence. Should the injured parties sue the minor and receive a judgment in excess of policy limits, the judgment can haunt the minor for years to come.

An initial judgment is good for ten years and can be renewed thereafter. An abstract of judgment can be

recorded with the county recorder and acts as a lien against real property owned or acquired in the county. Such liens have to be paid before real property is purchased, sold or borrowed against. Judgments can also be reflected on credit reports with negative repercussions.

A writ of execution can be obtained and used to garnish wages or levy on bank accounts.

None of these legal remedies are necessary if adequate insurance levels are maintained. Excess or umbrella policies with limits of \$1,000,000 can cost as little as \$400 per year and will provide a much greater level of protection. As an added benefit, where the insured is injured, a properly configured policy will increase the insured's own protection if the other driver is at fault and is either uninsured or underinsured.

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Mason Gregorius Argonaut High

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This, of course, depends on teens keeping their cell phone with them and not letting the batteries run down. Another device known as a "Black Box" is a similar to devices used to track emergency vehicles and commercial trucks. This complex device allows parents to monitor teen driving in real-time through a computer or cell phone. The system, which blends cell phone technology with GPS, can be preset to snitch by sending automatic alerts when a young driver is driving too fast, too far or somewhere he or she is not meant to be. These systems are capable of recording mileage, speed, and many other details that are stored on a chip to be downloaded to a computer later. Another high-tech monitoring device is known as a

DriveCam. The automotive equivalent of the "black box" data recorder found in airplanes, DriveCam is a tiny video camera installed behind your vehicle's rearview mirror. Created by a risk management company, DriveCam Inc., it continuously records both the view forward, out the front of the vehicle, and inside, back at the driver, but never saves any data unless its "accelerometer" is triggered by an irregular vehicle movement such as extreme acceleration, braking, cornering, or a collision. When the device is activated, it records the "event," consisting of the 10 seconds before and after the triggering of the accelerometer. It shows what happened and why it happened. This video is then wirelessly transferred to a center in Iowa where it is analyzed. After being viewed and scored by

an independent group, the results and the video are uploaded onto a Web site that only a teen and their parents have access to.

With all these ways for parents to monitor their children, it makes one wonder if the old fashion system of trust is still the most popular

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form of parental control. I personally feel that it is a parents responsibility to inform their children of the dangers involved in driving. Even though parents can be over-protective of their teen drivers, I feel that it is not only a responsibility but an

obligation to let their child go on their own and truly learn how to drive. Getting a license is not a certificate showing that one is a good driver, merely a privilege given to teens allowing us to gain valuable experience before we leave home. I feel each parent has the right to choose the most appropriate way to monitor their children. However, most people learn through the natural consequences of their actions. One must wonder if the use of technology will obscure the natural process of learning and if it is best to simply trust the abilities of a teen driver and give a little freedom that will better prepare them for a long future of safe driving.

Why do we enforce Traffic laws... *CHP speaks out*

Did you know in California that:

- In total 3906 family members, friends & co-workers are killed and 303,102 are injured annually in traffic collisions due to traffic violations.
- Over 542 family members, friends and co-workers are killed and 87,095 are injured annually in traffic collisions due to speeding violations.
- Over 1313 family members, friends & co-workers are killed and 31,205 are injured annually in traffic collisions involving the use of alcohol/drugs.
- Over 1277 family members, friends & co-

workers are killed and 29,700 injured annually in traffic collisions due to not wearing a seat belt or not being properly restrained in a child safety seat.

There is a misconception that the California Highway Patrol (CHP) writes tickets to generate revenue for its operations. Nothing could be further

from the truth. The CHP receives no funding from traffic fines. We enforce the law for one compelling reason—to save your life!

If you wish to learn more about our traffic safety efforts, please contact your local CHP office or visit www.chp.ca.gov.

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Graduated Driver's License a "Good Thing"? *Marci Russell*

Car crashes remain the primary cause of death for U.S. teenagers. Each year about 6000 teens between the ages of 16 and 19 die in accidents. According to an October, 2006 "Time" magazine article the number of fatalities for this age group is higher than those caused by guns and drug overdoses combined. The article went on to note that 45 states have adopted some form of graduated driver licensing, or "GDL". The graduated drivers license lengthens the waiting period new teen drivers must submit to before they become "go anywhere, anytime" drivers.

Research from the Institute of Mental Health has shown that the part of the brain that controls judgment and impulsive behavior isn't fully developed until the age of 25. This research and the statistics show-

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ing the high incidence of teen fatalities have brought to the forefront the need for stricter driving laws for teens.

Many states have implemented their GDL program after tragedy struck. In Nevada, Susan Larimer started lobbying for stricter license processing after her son, Sean, was involved in an accident with tragic consequences. The sixteen year old teen had been licensed for only 63 days when he was the driver in an accident which killed three of his friends and injured a fourth. He was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and reckless driving and served two years in a juvenile facility. In 2005, Nevada put in place one of the most comprehensive GDL plans in the nation. The plan requires teen drivers to be off the road by 10 pm (Sean's accident occurred at 1 am), mandates at least 50 hours of parent-supervised driving, and

forbids teens to transport other youths for the first three months of their licensing. It has been found that passengers in cars with teen drivers are not only a distraction, but also tend to influence the teen driver to take risks they otherwise wouldn't.

California's law, enacted in 1998, has resulted in a 23% drop overall in teen crashes, while late night crashes were down by 27% and crashes with teen passengers were down 38%.

The recent change in Nevada's GDL is being met with ambivalence and an unwillingness by parents to enforce the laws set for their teen drivers. A mother in Las Vegas, whose seventeen year old daughter had three fender benders in her first year of licensing, doubts a 10 pm curfew will keep her daugh-

ter safer. She feels that her daughter needs to be on the road and not held back; that she should be in control of her own destiny. Another parent with a sixteen year old daughter wasn't worried about her daughter who was driving two friends to a party which ended at the 10 pm curfew time. She wasn't going to have her leave early or race home to beat the curfew.

However, maybe other parents will be influenced by the statistics which prove graduated drivers licenses have an impact. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, California's law, enacted in 1998, has resulted in a 23% drop overall in teen crashes, while late night crashes were down by 27% and crashes with teen passengers were down 38%. If statistics such as these are seen in states which have recently implemented their own GDL, there may be hope that more parents will be convinced to enforce the rules with their teen drivers.

Cell Phones - What's The Deal?

Retired CHP officer Ken Mazzanti

Want to have some fun? Have a friend sit directly in front of you, and watch their eyes as you ask a few questions. Nothing too personal or embarrassing, just something to make them think. What is your mother's birthday? What is the earliest thing you remember as a child? The answers aren't important, but what their eyes do is. Most people are visually oriented. They learn by seeing. Some are auditory and learn by hearing. Some learn by touch or kinetically. Use of words tells a lot about the way people learn. "can you see what I am saying?". (visual learners) "Can you hear what I'm saying" (auditory). A kinetic person may say "can you feel what I'm saying?" Most people are a blend of all three, but learn most by one channel of communication or another. When a visual person is searching their memory they will look up and left. The higher up they look, including straight up, the more visual they are. An auditory person looks toward their ear, and a kinetic

Peripheral vision does not have depth perception. You can't tell how far away something is from you

tends to look downward.. Now remember, these are generalizations, and other factors come into play. As a person tells you a made up story, their eyes may go left to pick out thoughts in their memory, but their eyes will bounce to their right quite often as they "construct" a story. To their left is called "recall" and to the right it's called "construction".

What does this have to do with driving a car you ask? Plenty. When you talk with friends while you are driving you like to look at them to see their expressions or so they can see yours. You may look in the rear view mirror to see someone in the backseat or turn to the

right to talk with the person next to you. When you do your eyes are off the road and on your friend, even if for just a second. Can you still see ahead? Sure, but when you look away from center you see with your peripheral vision. This means on the outside or edges of your visual field. The problem? Peripheral vision does not have depth perception. You can't tell how far away something is from you. Depth perception requires "binocular" or "two eye" vision. Are you following too closely to the car ahead? Has someone slowed without braking? You may find yourself too close, too late

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to stop. Ok, now remember the eye thing? When you talk on the cell phone, whether you are holding it or not, having a conversation, your eyes will be in recall or construction as you remember ideas or events or as you construct a story of what you are telling your friend about. When your eyes are looking left or right you don't have the depth perception you need to avoid hazards. You may be a great driver, but there are lots of less skillful drivers all around you who do some really bad things while steering a few thousand pounds of metal down the road. To defend yourself against those "other" drivers you need your eyes on the road ahead of you, not looking left and right while having a great conversation with friends. If it's worth talking about tell them you will call them back when you get where you are going, or hook up with them later and tell them in person. (Then you can watch their eyes to see if their mind is

remembering something real or making something up as in "construction"). If you really care about someone talk to them face to face. You may like what you see.

Ken Mazzanti is a retired Amador CHP officer who retired as a Sergeant after 30 years with CHP.

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