



Frederic Lambert photo

Jonathan Peterson points his Oldsmobile Alero around the skidpad at the Street Survival school in February 2010.

Street Survival teaches skills to last a lifetime

NSCN STAFF

The Tire Rack Street Survival program is a “hands-on” driving experience in real-world situations that gives young drivers the skills they need to avoid accident situations.

The next program is scheduled for Nov. 20 at Bremerton Motorsports Park.

Sobering statistics from several studies by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention illustrate the dangers young drivers face and potentially pose to themselves.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, accounting for more than one in three deaths in this age group. In 2008, nine Americans ages 16 to 19 died every day from motor vehicle injuries. Per mile driven, drivers ages 16 to 19 are four times more likely than older drivers to crash.

In 2008, about 3,500 teens in the United States aged 15 to 19 were killed and more than 350,000 were treated in emergency departments for injuries suffered in motor-vehicle crashes.

Young people ages 15 to 24 represent only 14 percent of the U.S. population. However, they account for 30 percent (\$19 billion) of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries among

males and 28 percent (\$7 billion) of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries among females.

The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16- to 19-year-olds than among any other age group. In fact, per mile driven, drivers ages 16 to 19 are four times more likely than older drivers to crash.

What factors put teen drivers at risk?

Teens are more likely than older drivers to underestimate dangerous situations or not be able to recognize hazardous situations. Teens are more likely than older drivers to speed. The presence of male teenage passengers increases the likelihood of risky driving behavior.

Among male drivers between 15 and 20 years of age who were involved in fatal crashes in 2005, 37 percent were speeding at the time of the crash and 26 percent had been drinking.

In 2008, 25 percent of drivers ages 15 to 20 who died in motor vehicle crashes had a blood-alcohol content of 0.08 or higher.

In a national survey conducted in 2007, nearly three out of 10 teens reported that, within the previous month, they had ridden with a driver who had been drinking alcohol. One in 10 reported having driven after

drinking alcohol within the same one-month period.

Fortunately, teen motor vehicle crashes are preventable, and proven strategies can improve the safety of young drivers on the road.

One of those programs is the Tire Rack Street Survival teen driving school, which was developed by the BMW Car Club of America and the BMW CCA Foundation in 2002. The programs have expanded to most major communities and are now conducted as well by Sports Car Club of America regions with support from the SCCA Foundation.

The registration fee of \$75, which covers the cost of materials and equipment, provides students with experienced instructors who safely guide students through a day of behind-the-wheel instruction and short classroom sessions. Driving skill courses are specifically designed to mimic everyday driving hazards, obstacles and challenges. Participants use the vehicles the student driver is most familiar with, which is usually their family or personal car, truck or SUV.

Register students online for this program at www.streetsurvival.org.

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