

Peardale Chicago Park Fire Protection District

Highway Safety

Living in the foothills affords a more tranquil and leisurely setting than big cities and the attendant congested highways. However, narrow and often winding thoroughfares are the rule here. Consider these points:

Narrow roads and soft shoulders leave little room for errors. Intersections and driveways can merge into your path over a hill or on a blind bend. Your reaction time is greatly reduced! Any lapse of attention can and does cause accidents. A big item here would be cell phones. Most of us use them while driving, but hand held usage and texting while driving is illegal in California. More importantly, they are undeniably linked to accidents.

Many intersections are unregulated and require courtesy and attention to right of way. Accidents occur when motorists fail to yield or incorrectly judge the intent of another driver.

Deer and other wildlife are common in our rural habitat, particularly at night when animals are more difficult to see and often “freeze” in the glare of headlights.

Compromised road surfaces are common in the fall and winter seasons. The first rains bring oils to the surface and along with vegetative debris, present extremely slick conditions. Rain, snow and ice can make driving treacherous. On winding roads, a reduced braking capability coupled with a short line of sight requires extra caution. The bottom line: drive within the law and drive for the conditions.

According to the NHTSA, aggressive driving has become a serious problem on our roadways. What is aggressive driving? Most of us know it when we see it, but NHTSA, after discussions with law enforcement and the judiciary, defines aggressive driving as occurring when "an individual commits a combination of moving traffic offenses so as to endanger other persons or property." NHTSA provides guides, planners and information to law enforcement professionals and prosecutors to assist in the reduction of aggressive driving.

Seat belts save lives and the truth of this is evident to all of us at your Fire Department. Remember too that the law requires seat belts to be used or, “Click It or Ticket”.

A few related facts and good reasons to wear seat belts:

Reduces the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent — and by 60 percent in pickup trucks, SUVs, and minivans;
Increases the odds of survival in a rollover accident in a light truck by nearly 80 percent;
Saves lives — 15,147 in 2007 alone, and during the five-year period from 2003 through 2007, seat belts saved a total of 76,936 lives.

By modeling safe driving behavior and always buckling up — and insisting your teen driver and passengers do the same — you can have a positive influence and help protect your teen and others from the risk of being severely injured in a motor vehicle collision.

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To learn more about how to get involved in helping your teen develop safe driving habits, be sure to visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Web page at www.nhtsa.gov.

A study of driving under the influence of alcohol compared to driving while on the phone is pretty enlightening. Here's the short of it. Read the full report by checking online, www.livescience.com/health/060629_cell_phones.html

Those talking on either handheld or hands-free cell phones drove slightly slower, were 9 percent slower to hit the brakes when necessary, showed 24 percent more variation in following distance, and were 19 percent slower to resume normal speed after braking. Three study participants rear-ended the virtual pace car while talking. Those who were drunk drove a bit more slowly than both undistracted drivers and drivers using cell phones, yet they drove more aggressively. They followed the pace car more closely, were twice as likely to brake only four seconds before a collision would have occurred, and hit their brakes with 23 percent more force.

But nobody crashed while driving under the influence.

And please, be mindful of fire and other public safety vehicles responding to an incident. Pull to the right and slow down or stop. However, avoid abrupt movements as other drivers also need time to react.

Drive safely and enjoy the beauty of our community