We’re heading into that special time of year, a time of proms and parties, a time of graduation and celebration. Unfortunately, many teenagers make alcohol consumption a part of their season’s activities. And then they drive.

On the Internet Web site Mothers Against Drunk Driving—MADD.org—it says that 20 percent of the deaths of the people between the ages of 16 and 20 were caused by alcohol–related car crashes. That percentage translates to 2,222 young people killed because of drinking and driving. But being involved in a serious accident is not all that can happen to kids that choose to booze and operate a motor vehicle. The mother of a 20-year-old man asked me to pass along what she and her husband and her son learned more than a year ago.

Stopped for a minor infraction

He was 19 and driving a couple of pals around, and they were drinking beer. That may not seem like such a big deal to you. It came as quite a surprise to this fellow when he learned just how big a deal it can be, and how long it can take to get over it. A cop pulled him over because of his fog lights, but quickly determined that a more serious law was being violated. As a public service, this young man and his parents want you to know what you can expect if something similar happens to you:

• After you are arrested you are shackled and taken to jail.
• Your car is taken to a pound and held until you can afford to get it out.
• You will spend the night in jail and if you don’t make bond you will be there more nights until a judge says you can leave.
• You will be stripped, searched, fingerprinted, and photographed.
• You won’t get any sleep and will have a variety of rough, drunk, dirty, bleeding cellmates.
• Soon after you get out, you will get dozens of letters from lawyers offering to represent you. Figure on at least $500.
• What you can expect for your money is a phone conversation with the lawyer who will spend about an hour with you on the day that you spend in court.
• You will pay about $2,500 in legal fees, court costs, and probation fees.

Drinking, Driving Carries a High Price

Thom Marshall, Houston Chronicle, reprinted with permission
You will be required to do community service. (The fellow who experienced this list first-hand got 60 hours).

You will have to depend on public transportation or family to get you to work, probation, school, community service—every place you must be to fulfill the requirements of your probation. When you must provide proof of identification, like at the airport for example, instead of a driver’s license you will have a card bearing your name and photo and the fact that you are an offender of Harris County.

You are required to carry this card with you at all times.

You can’t leave the state without permission.

You will have to attend a victims impact meeting.

The judge may require you to write a letter of apology to your parents for the disappointment, shame, and grief you caused them.

There are better choices

“I had no idea that the consequences were that severe,” said the 20-year-old man who recently completed his probation and regained his driver’s license. He said it was a year of many embarrassments. He said it was a year of unyielding demands upon his budget and his time. He says he wants you to know about the consequences and hopes you make a better choice than he did.

Thom Marshall’s e-mail address is thom.marshall@chron.com

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**Project Management Course, April 24-27, 2001**—Over 26 participants received their traffic safety grants process indoctrination in Austin.

The diverse group included project coordinators from every type of project we administer: John McKay of Texas Engineering Extension Service and Gary Taylor of NHTSA Region VI led the course. Jacque Magill of the Austin District of TxDOT and Terry Pence of the Traffic Safety Section were key instructors. The next course is being arranged for this fall.

**Project Celebration**—TxDOT had another successful year helping to promote Project Celebrations throughout the state. In 2001 over 600 schools received seed money to help organize and hold alcohol-free parties around the prom and graduation time frame. TxDOT District Traffic Safety Specialists spread the word of “Nada, Zilch, Zero, None” with 135,000 keychains and 2,500 T-shirts.

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**Stricter Alcohol Limits Saving Teenage Drivers**—A report in the May 2001 American Journal of Public Health states that teenagers’ drinking and driving has dropped by nearly one-fifth in states with stricter blood alcohol limits for young people. "The BAC law for young people reinforces the law that moved the legal drinking age up to 21," said Alexander C. Wagenaar of the University of Minnesota. He also stated that this is consistent with a 10-20 percent decline in alcohol-related car crashes in states with the .02 or lower BAC level for young drivers. Texas has required a 0.00 BAC level for underage drivers since 1997.

**Child Passenger Safety Week**—The Traffic Safety Specialists in the 25 TxDOT District offices were active participants in Child Passenger Safety Week activities. Becky Gutierrez in Laredo hosted a safety seat check at the District office, while Karen Peoples in Lubbock held a press conference, made seat belt presentations at schools, and held safety seat check points in two communities. Patsy Walls of Wichita Falls took Trooper Bud, the safety robot, to elementary schools along with Vince and Larry. Many of the other districts also held events to support child passenger safety.

**Safe Homes Pledge**—The community of Westlake Hills, an Austin suburb, has instituted a program to reduce underage youth alcohol use. Parents are asked to sign a pledge sheet stating they will not serve or allow minors to consume alcohol or illegal drugs. They also pledge to be at home when minors gather, and to communicate with the parents or guardians concerned about the safety of children in the signer’s home. Additional information can be obtained from Kathy Tally, Safe Homes, 7 Cousteau Lane, Austin, Texas 78746.

**K.E.Y.S.** (Keeping Every Youth Safe) is a program created by USAA Insurance to help teens become safer, more responsible drivers. It consists of four elements which arrive around the youth’s birthday every year from ages15-18. For more information, call USAA at 1-800-511-2911.
CORPORATE SUPPORT FOR KIDS

Cindy Parks, Waco District Traffic Safety Specialist

If you are looking for someone who cares about kids, look no further than Tranum Buick in Temple, Texas. For the past three years they have been the ideal partners for a child safety seat check. Twice a year the dealership closes down its sales and service departments to provide a CSS check event. That day you cannot buy a car or have your vehicle serviced. But you can have your child safety seat checked by a nationally certified Child Passenger Safety Technician.

Helen Quinn of Tranum organizes one of the best checkup events I have ever seen. The dealership pays for radio, television, and newspaper ads; all daycare centers in the area are faxed flyers with the date, time, and location. On the day of the event, numerous volunteers from the dealership, local police departments, Texas Department of Public Safety, hospitals, and nursing schools run the check-up. Clowns, balloons, hot dogs, and soda make the event even more festive. An ambulance, Care Flight helicopter, and a police cruiser offer children and adults lots to explore.

The dealership has three certified technicians on staff, including the owner. Tranum also provides all the replacement seats for the checkup. When they ran out of sets at one event, the dealership collected the names and addresses of people still needing a seat. Within a week, each of these people had new child safety seats installed. Over 400 seats were provided in the last two years.

The event saves kids, plus offers a pay-back to Tranum Buick in the number of people who shop for a car there after seeing the dealership’s involvement in child safety. Ms. Quinn will gladly lend her “secrets for success” with anyone wanting to put on a similar event. Her phone number is 254-657-2735.

Spring Break

Sherry McLeroy, Traffic Safety Specialist, Corpus Christi District

The Corpus Christi and San Antonio Districts combined their Spring Break festivities at J.P. Luby Park on North Padre Island and had a ball getting the word out to youth on the dangers of drinking and driving, and the zero tolerance message on underage alcohol use. With beautiful weather including lots of sunshine and cool ocean breezes, 582 students signed pledges to not drink and drive, with over 1,000 students taking advantage of opportunities to learn about the dangers of alcohol misuse while consuming a lot of food and non-alcoholic drinks.

Thirty to forty daily volunteers, including local law enforcement officials, distributed food, sunscreen, T-shirts, drinks, water, footballs, beach towels, food coupons, koozies, and chip clips donated by 28 sponsors. The three network TV stations and two local radio stations did live remotes from the beach site. Officers from the Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission, the Corpus Christi Police Department, the Nueces County Constable’s Department, the Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Jim Wells County Sheriff’s Office contributed expertise and time to make it a learning event as well as fun. Using the Rollover Conviner, Fatal Vision Goggles, and computer informational programs such as “Dead or Alive” and the “Blood Alcohol Educator,” officers and volunteers educated the students about the life-saving use of safety belts and drinking misuse.

The students lined up to participate and we could see the light “click on” for some of them. TxDOT’s Pat Kraus found a special way to get the students’ attention on the Rollover Conviner. When Pat saw that the dummies kept falling out, he dug a grave out of the sand and placed a cross at the head of the grave. The dummies would fall out and land in the grave half the time. The students began really watching and making comments. They acted like the dummies were real people. We learned a lesson in educating students about safety. It doesn’t matter how you teach them, as long as the point is made and they take it with them.
New Traffic Safety-Related Legislation Passed by the 77th Legislature

During the 77th Legislature, several bills were passed with traffic safety impacts. Some have been signed into law, while others are still awaiting the governor’s action. We will continue to update which bills become law.

Signed into Law

SB 399. Bans children under the age of 18 from riding in the open beds of pick-ups. Exceptions are included for driving on a beach and migrant workers driving from field to field. Local governments can give permits for traditional hayrides in certain communities.

HB 69. Increases the penalty for failing or refusing to take a breath test. Penalty for driving while intoxicated or refusing to take a breath test is suspension of driving license for 90 days if you have no alcohol or drug related offenses in the past 10 years. The penalty is increased to a one-year suspension if the individual has had their license suspended in the past 10 years. Officers can also immediately take licenses away if a driver is arrested or refuse to take a breath test. If the driver has a conviction within the last 10 years, the suspension lasts one year.

SB 113. Requires children 17 and younger to be wearing a safety belt, regardless of where they are seated in a passenger car or light truck. This raises the age by two years.

HB 5. Bans the possession of open alcoholic beverage containers in the passenger area of a motor vehicle on a public highway.

SB 377. Establishes restrictions on the driver’s licenses of youth under the age of 18 (frequently called graduated licensing).

HB 63. Increase the time a license is to be suspended for failure to take or pass a breath test for alcohol. This bill also doubles the length of time a drug or alcohol-related offense remains on the driving record to 10 years.

Texas ACTS: Strategic Planning for Safe Communities

Sam Mitchell, TxDOT/TRF

The Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) has developed a Web-based traffic safety assessment tool, Assessing Community Traffic Safety (ACTS), for the Texas Safe Communities program. The ACTS program allows communities to identify traffic safety assets (from a list of 39 choices) the community may have available to address key traffic safety deficits (crash and safe driving problems).

Using 25 brief questionnaires on the Website, which ask various community partners questions about their traffic safety assets, an individual scores the assets on a scale of 0 (we don’t have the asset) to 100 (everyone agrees we have the asset). Then the individual or community uses the information developed to build an Action Plan that identifies which traffic safety assets are needed to offset each of the 19 possible deficits. The program also offers advice and resources for implementing programs to build assets capable of offsetting the deficits.

The web address is townsafety.com/actsweb. You can enter the site as a guest for the State of Texas (Michigan is also a partner in the project) and explore the resources. Many folks like to click on the “data” link under the “Site Links” box on the left of the homepage. The data page lists the K-A (death and disabling injuries) injury statistics from traffic crashes for all 254 counties in Texas. You can quickly discover where your county ranks in terms of crash-related injuries across the 11 parameters.

If you would like to become part of the ACTS Safe Communities, or need more information, contact Sam Mitchell, the TxDOT Safe Communities contact, at smitchel@dot.state.tx.us. Or contact William Donohue at MPHI (donohue@msu.edu) for more information or a tour of the site. We hope to hear from you.
RMA Announces “Be Tire Smart” Program

Only 23 percent of drivers received a grade of “C” or better in a recent nationwide survey testing their knowledge of proper automobile tire care. Thirty-six percent scored a “D” and 41 percent flunked the survey. The Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA) has launched their “Be Tire Smart—Play Your PART” public education program in an effort to fight this lack of tire safety knowledge among consumers. According to RMA’s President, Donald B. Shea, “NHTSA estimated that 250,000 crashes a year result from improperly inflated tires. RMA’s goal is to help decrease this number through proper education. The campaign will help drivers learn the simple steps they can take to be sure their tires are in good working condition.” Using media outreach, tire safety brochures, partnerships, and an interactive Website, RMA is working to draw attention to the importance of maintaining safe tires. Using the acronym PART (Pressure, Alignment, Rotation, Tread), the campaign stresses that tires require care to remain safe and last longer. Facts sheets on the Website provide easy-to-understand information not only on how to maintain your tires but why this maintenance is important. The consumer brochures are available in Spanish as well as English. For further information, contact Ben Finzel of RMA at 202-828-8809 (e-mail is finzelb@fleishman.org). You can check out their Website at www.rma.org/tiresafety.

Texas law requires that we update our mailing list annually in three consecutive notices. If you would like to continue to receive Driveline, please fill out the form below. Then just cut on the above line, seam, fold and tape. Be sure the business reply notice is on the outside; no postage necessary.

This is the third of three consecutive notices. Only one reply is necessary. If a reply is not received by October 2001, we will have to delete your name from our mailing list.

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If you have any suggestions on how we can improve Driveline or any other comments, please let us know.

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# Texas Department of Transportation District Office Phone Numbers

To obtain traffic safety information, contact the Texas Department of Transportation’s District Office nearest you and ask for the Traffic Safety Specialist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abilene</td>
<td>(915) 675-6800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amarillo</td>
<td>(806) 356-3200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>(903) 796-2851</td>
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<td>Austin</td>
<td>(512) 832-7000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beaumont</td>
<td>(409) 892-7311</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brownwood</td>
<td>(915) 646-2591</td>
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<td>Bryan</td>
<td>(409) 778-2165</td>
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<td>Childress</td>
<td>(940) 937-7100</td>
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<td>Corpus Christi</td>
<td>(512) 808-2300</td>
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<td>Dallas</td>
<td>(214) 320-6100</td>
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<td>El Paso</td>
<td>(915) 774-4200</td>
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<td>Fort Worth</td>
<td>(817) 370-6500</td>
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<td>Houston</td>
<td>(713) 802-5000</td>
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<td>Laredo</td>
<td>(956) 712-7400</td>
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<td>Lubbock</td>
<td>(806) 745-4411</td>
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<td>Lufkin</td>
<td>(936) 634-4433</td>
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<td>Odessa</td>
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<td>Paris</td>
<td>(903) 737-9300</td>
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<td>Pharr</td>
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<td>San Angelo</td>
<td>(915) 944-1501</td>
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<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>(210) 615-1110</td>
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<td>Tyler</td>
<td>(903) 510-9100</td>
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<td>Waco</td>
<td>(254) 867-2700</td>
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<td>Wichita Falls</td>
<td>(940) 720-7700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoakum</td>
<td>(512) 293-4300</td>
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TXDOT SHOWS THE RESULTS OF BUCKLING UP

In early May, the Traffic Safety Section of TxDOT unveiled the above billboard on I-35 in Austin. The billboard is an actual 1996 Z-28 Camaro that struck a tree at a high rate of speed when the driver lost control in northern Travis County. The right passenger door of the car struck the tree, with the tree trunk penetrating all the way to the transmission shaft. Both the passenger and the driver were wearing safety belts. Both lived. The passenger suffered a non-debilitating injury to his knee and the driver had a traumatic head injury, but is recovering. The billboard is a dramatic demonstration of the value of safety belts. The billboard is moving to the Dallas-Fort Worth area in August, where it will be displayed adjacent to I-30.