



WPD NEWS

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**** Media Advisory ****

WPD Asks Young Drivers to Use Caution During Prom Time

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teenage drivers in America, and the Wichita Police Department is urging teens and their parents to exercise extra caution during this time of year when many young drivers will be attending proms.

“According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, immaturity and inexperience combined with speed, not wearing seatbelts, drinking and driving, and driving while distracted cause many injury and fatal traffic crashes,” said Deputy Chief Robert Lee. “Other factors which also aggravate this problem include drowsy driving, nighttime driving, and other drug use.”

Lee said young driver ages 15-20 are especially vulnerable to injury or death in traffic crashes.

“Nationally in 2006, 12.9% of all drivers killed were between 15 and 20 years of age. In addition, one-fourth of drivers ages 15-20 who were killed in crashes had a

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blood alcohol concentration levels of .08% or higher. Often, binge drinking contributes to this problem.

“Moreover, 4,842 teen passengers ages 15-20 were killed in traffic crashes in the U.S. in 2006, and 58% of them were not wearing seatbelts at the time of the crash. In Kansas, 46 drivers and 15 passengers, all between the ages of 15 and 20, were killed in 2006, said Lee.

In Wichita, the city recorded two traffic fatalities in 2006 and one in 2007 where the victims were between the ages of 15 and 20.

Lee said the number of injury and fatal accidents goes up when there are one or more teen passengers riding with a teen driver. In addition, he said speeding and distractions, such as cell phones and music, weigh heavily as factors that cause young Kansas drivers to get into trouble. Kansas does not have a law prohibiting talking or text-messaging on cell phones while driving.

“We hope parents will monitor the activities of their children and encourage them to use added caution,” said Lee. “Ideally parents and their teenage children should have the type of open communication that, before their teen steps into a car with someone they know has been drinking, they can call a parent to come get them.”

“While the Wichita Police Department wants young people to enjoy their prom and the coming summer months, we also ask that they act responsibly and think about these factors that could, tragically, cut their young lives short.”