

# Driving Responsibly

In today's fast-paced society, driving safely is everybody's responsibility. Our personal habits and lifestyle choices influence not only our own health, but sometimes the well-being of others. In society today, we must make difficult choices when innocent persons are victimized by the irresponsibility of others. Understanding the laws of physics enables us to make more informed

choices when decisions need to be made to reduce personal injury, property damage, and emotional trauma caused by careless driving. In the following case studies, try to use your scientific knowledge to assess the situation and implement a plan of action to improve attitudes and personal habits, and to promote safe driving.

### Case Study # 1

Mr. Smith is 52 years of age. One night around 9:00 p.m., he was driving down Gladstone Street at the posted speed limit of 60 km/h. He promised to pick up his wife at 8:45 p.m. and he was late. Mr. Smith was listening to the hockey game on the car radio while he looked for his turn on Tower Blvd. Ms. Martin, wearing a dark blue coat, crossed in the middle of the street without looking both ways for oncoming traffic. When Mr. Smith noticed her, he applied the brakes but he did not stop in time, and his car collided with Ms. Martin. Police arrived and questioned Mr. Smith who said that he never saw the pedestrian. He admitted that he had a few beers before he left home, and a test revealed his blood-alcohol content was 0.06, below the legal limit of 0.08. The police did not charge him with any offences.

#### Challenge

**After a large number of motor vehicle collisions similar to Mr. Smith's, the Chief of Police calls on you to submit a report to:**

- assess and clarify the problem
- review the police actions
- evaluate the available research
- develop a course of action to reduce such incidents

## Case Study # 2

In your notebook, complete the following anticipation guide before and after you read the news article that follows on the next page.

### Anticipation Guide

<p>Drivers who have serious accidents are likely to be the common “troublemakers”.</p>	<p>Before:</p> <p>After:</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>Criminal charges should be laid against young drivers who are involved in accidents.</p>	<p>Before:</p> <p>After:</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>The laws of physics suggest cars that are out of control can be brought back into control.</p>	<p>Before:</p> <p>After:</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>Most serious accidents caused by teenage drivers are the result of illegal narcotics or high blood-alcohol levels.</p>	<p>Before:</p> <p>After:</p> <p>Comments:</p>
<p>New driving laws, like Graduated Driver Licencing, drafted specifically for novice drivers are intended to maintain unreasonable control over young adults.</p>	<p>Before:</p> <p>After:</p> <p>Comments:</p>

*Sample Only.  
Do not write here.*

## Lebanon teen-ager dies of injuries suffered in crash

By GISELLE GOODMAN and DAVID HENCH, Portland Press Herald Writers • Copyright (c) 2002 Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc.

A 14-year-old Lebanon boy died Friday from injuries he suffered in a car crash the previous day.

Authorities are considering criminal charges against the 16-year-old driver, who got his license two months ago and was not supposed to have passengers. Colin Robinson, a junior firefighter known for his helpful nature, suffered fatal injuries in the crash at 11 a.m. Thursday on Long Swamp Road in Lebanon. Also injured were his brother Chadd Robinson, 17, and the driver, whose name has not been released because he is a juvenile facing the possibility of criminal charges. Both teen-agers were listed in stable condition Friday at local hospitals.

The three Lebanon teen-agers, students at Noble High School, were headed for the driver's house when he lost control of his Mercury Sable, which crashed into an oncoming car and landed in a water-filled ditch. Colin Robinson, who would have been 15 next month, died at 2 a.m. Friday at Maine Medical Center in Portland and his organs were donated to others. "He was dedicated to helping the community," said Jason Cole, Lebanon's assistant rescue chief. Robinson became a junior firefighter with the Lebanon Rescue Squad two years ago and wanted to be a firefighter or police officer when he grew up, Cole said. Whatever he became, Cole said, he was certain that Robinson would do something to help others. "He never caused any problems," Cole said. "He was just a good kid." In fact, when Cole blew a tire on Route 202 in Lebanon a few nights ago, it was Robinson, pedalling by on the bike he always rode, who stopped to help. Cole said all three of the boys in the car Thursday were good kids. "If (the driver) was thinking, he never would have done anything to hurt the other kids," Cole said. At Noble High on Friday, students who went to school knowing their classmates had been hurt in an accident learned with an awful jolt that Robinson, a freshman, was dead. "You're not sure if you talked to him just yesterday, or if you were mean to him," said 16-year-old Lindsey Adams. "I just haven't put it all together yet." Spencer Eldredge, a junior, said he didn't know Robinson well. But that didn't matter. He was still shaken by the news. "Death is just really final," Eldredge said. "I feel so bad for those who were pretty good friends with him. It puts a big black eye on the whole school year."

The school allowed grieving students to go home and offered counselling to students who needed it. Peggy Paine, of Crisis Response Services of York County, was one of those counsellors. She said the students she talked to were shocked and numbed by the news. "It's not normal and it's not fair," she said. "There have been a lot of tears, sobs and then the kids taking care of each other." Those who knew him might say

Robinson would have been one of those caretakers. "Whenever we needed a hand," Cole said, "he was there to help." Maine State Police Trooper Mark Holmquist, the primary accident investigator, routinely uses photographs of fatal accidents to teach Noble High students about the dangers of driving too fast. But this one "may be too powerful," he said.

The three boys had stopped at the Cumberland Farms in Berwick to buy gas before heading to the driver's house in the middle of the school day, Holmquist said. He did not know if they made any other purchases or what they did earlier that morning. The driver was headed north when he drove off the side of the road, then overcorrected and hit an oncoming Honda. The driver of the Honda and his young daughter were not seriously injured. The Honda was travelling slowly and was able to stop before the cars collided, possibly avoiding additional deaths, Holmquist said. The side of the Mercury, between the front and rear passenger doors, slammed into the front of the Honda. Colin Robinson, the back-seat passenger, was fatally injured even though he was wearing a seatbelt. Investigators spent Friday reconstructing the accident to determine precisely what happened and how fast the car was going when it crashed. Preliminary estimates put the speed at between 60 and 80 mph, police said. The posted speed limit in that area is 35 mph.

Police are still trying to find out why the students were not in class and why they were headed to the driver's house. Holmquist said the driver's mother and possibly his father were out of town when the accident occurred. Since getting his license, the driver had not been convicted of any infractions, Holmquist said, although he will do more research to determine whether any complaints are pending. Under state law, young drivers cannot give rides to young people outside of their family for the first 90 days they have their license. "It's an opportunity to allow new, young drivers to get comfortable behind the wheel and not have peer pressures on them in the first couple months," said Donna Giatas, director of communications for the Secretary of State's Office. The law was passed in 2000, in part because speed is statistically the greatest threat to young drivers. Police met Friday with prosecutors from the York County District Attorney's Office to review the case. Officials expect to make a decision early next week about what charges, if any, to bring against the driver.

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