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Invincible teens

Two more teenagers lost their lives this week in a fatal automobile accident. Two passengers in the car were seriously hurt. Police officials say the car was traveling "too fast" when it went into a long skid and crashed into an oak tree on Sanford Road, just north of Sebastopol. The front end of the car was sheared off during the impact.

It is an all-too-familiar story that, frankly, we get tired of telling. We'd much rather just tell the stories of the hundreds of teenagers who graduated this week from Analy and El Molino and marched off into adulthood with every possibility before them. But along with that sense of possibility, there is also a sense of invincibility, or perhaps immortality, that accompanies teens as they make the transition into the adult world. The lectures, demonstrations, editorials and warnings about the dangers of unsafe driving seem futile in the face of it.

People die in car crashes every day, but teenage drivers die at a rate four times higher than drivers between the ages of 25 and 65. Police have yet to say whether or not alcohol was involved in Monday night's crash, but we do know that it is often a factor in fatal accidents.

School and law enforcement officials make every effort to educate young drivers. Analy Principal Marty Webb, who knew the teens involved in this week's fatal accident, said "On the last day of school, I say 'Be careful.' Kids think they're immortal and nothing will ever happen to them."

Perhaps age and experience are the only factors that will change that. As parents, family members or teachers, we want to keep warning them. We want to sit them down and tell them we love them and we want them to be careful. Unfortunately, they don't always listen.

Many teenage drivers do listen. It's unfair to say all teenagers are reckless drivers. There are plenty of reckless adult drivers who speed and drink and drive and cause deaths. But the fact remains that teenage drivers are killed at a much higher rate than older adult drivers.


Teenagers regularly ignore the advice of adults about driving too fast or drinking and driving, that much we know. They ignore it at the risk of death. But that doesn't mean we will stop warning them, or telling them we care about them and want them to come home safely.

We must keep trying to convey the message that no one is invincible and that the choices teens make can have tragic consequences. We can only keep trying, and hope that some will listen.

- Barry W. Dugan

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