

Here are other common—and deadly—distractions among teenagers:

- **Friends in other vehicles.** Don't let saying "hi" or other fun and games take your attention off the road. Never try to pass items from one moving vehicle to another.
- **Headphones.** Hearing what's going on around you is just as important as seeing. In most states, it's illegal to wear headphones while driving.
- **The "show off" factor.** It may be tempting to go faster, turn sharper, or beat another car through an intersection, but don't

[In the United States, 16-year-olds have three times the crash risk of older teenagers and almost 10 times the crash risk of drivers ages 30 to 59. Accordingly, many states have varying components of a graduated-licensing program. The most common components of this program are nighttime-driving restrictions, provisional licensing with accelerated penalties, and driver-improvement programs. Some states require young drivers to hold a learner's permit for a minimum length of time, and they impose stringent requirements on the accompanying driver, such as having a specified number of years' driving experience.—Ed.]

do it. Stay focused on driving safely and staying alive. **A**

Information for this article came from the Shell Oil Company (its "Distracted Driving" booklet), the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, and the UNC Highway Safety Research Center, with assistance from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, and the National Safety Council. If you want to reproduce this story in any format, you first must obtain permission of all parties named above.—Ed.

30 MPH and 30 Feet to Stop

By Lt. Gerald Burghardt,
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Great weather year-round, wide-open highways, and beautiful scenery—perfect conditions for riding motorcycles, and you find it all in California. A couple squadromates and I decided to explore more of this area one gorgeous, autumn weekend.

I was the lead of three motorcycles. We had been riding for about two hours when we stopped for dinner. Afterward, we climbed

back on our bikes, made a right turn out of the restaurant, and rapidly accelerated. This exhilarating experience was short-lived, however, thanks to a red light ahead.

Because we were traveling a state route, the street was wide enough for a car to make a right turn at the light, so we started passing stopped cars on the right side. This movement put us in a position to make our right turn. At the intersection was a restaurant, and we



A full-coverage helmet like the one this rider is using provides the most protection. However, he should be wearing a reflective safety vest, too.

noticed a gap between the stopped vehicles on our left and the restaurant's parking lot on our right.

I looked at the cars to the left to see if anyone was coming. An elderly gentleman and his wife were making a left turn into the parking lot. I was going about 30 mph and felt sure the gentleman could see me. However, I noticed he was accelerating to pass through my lane. He never even looked my way; he took it for granted everyone was stopped for him.

I locked up my brakes with about 30 feet to stop. There was no way I could keep the motorcycle upright, so I started laying it down on the left side, putting it between the car and me. The motorcycle stopped abruptly, and, as the brakes and tires came out of the skid, traction returned, and the bike flipped over. Now I was between it and the car. The bike sent me sliding headfirst into the rear quarter of the car, toward the road.

My squadronmates pulled over to see if I was OK. I quickly got to my feet and watched the gentleman drive toward the parking lot, oblivious to what had happened. People who had witnessed the incident let the driver know he just had hit me. He then came over and checked on my condition, and the police and an ambulance soon arrived.

A deputy from the sheriff's department first interviewed the driver, while the ambu-

ulance crew came to see how I was doing. Since I could recall everything that had happened, they felt I hadn't suffered any head injuries, but they wanted to take me to a hospital anyway to have me checked. I told my squadronmates what to do with my bike and called my wife. After the deputy interviewed me, I went to the hospital.

Following this accident, my buddies told me they thought I was going under the car. They said it looked like the car's tire would run over my helmet.

I walked away with only a bruised right hand and hip and a scrape on one knee. My neck felt a little stiff for a couple of days, but I flew the following day. My leather jacket, jeans, gloves, and helmet didn't fare as well. The jacket and gloves had a bad case of road rash. My jeans tore at the knee, and my helmet still has the rubber on it from where the car's right, rear tire hit it. My motorcycle was totaled.

Applying operational risk management (ORM) in our daily work routines is something the Navy drills into us all the time. Although many often don't use ORM in their recreational activities, I applied it to mine and escaped to enjoy my dangerous pastime another day. All of the safety gear helped minimize my injuries. However, the most helpful was my helmet, which prevented my face from being crushed.

Motorcycle riding is inherently dangerous. Drivers often just don't see bikes. I'm thankful I wasn't injured worse, and I urge all fellow riders to wear protective gear and apply ORM to reduce the risks involved. 🚩

The victim's leather jacket and helmet looked like this after the mishap. Note the road rash on the jacket and the marks on the helmet from the car's right, rear tire.

