

IS YOUR COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT CAMPUS SAFE?



By Mark Bello

Soon-to-be college students are shopping for their dorm essentials (e.g., comforter, duffel bag, desk lamp, etc.) as they prepare for their first extended periods away from home. College brings a sense of independence for most students. With so much anticipation and excitement, personal safety can be easily overlooked. Students may believe they are protected because they are surrounded by their peers and feel relatively insulated in their own "community" – the college campus. Unfortunately, crime is just as high, sometimes higher, on campus as it is off campus. With that said, safety awareness on college campuses has never been more important.

For the first time, your children will be totally responsible for their own personal safety. Are they prepared in case an emergency occurs? Will they feel safe and secure?

Here are several campus safety tips to help students stay safe while away at school. Practicing these safety fundamentals can help eliminate many of the risks they could poten-

tially face.

Be aware of your surroundings.

This is the single most important tip to ensure your personal safety. Know all of the routes around campus. Be confident. Walk with your head up, look around and notice everything. Look into a stranger's face and take note of distinguishing features. Notice when a vehicle slows down suspiciously and pay attention to the license plate. Be aware of anyone loitering or hanging around campus, your dorm, vehicle, etc.

Lock all doors and windows. When leaving your dorm or apartment, make sure that all doors and windows are locked - including the main building entry and exits. Never prop doors open. Do not loan your keys to anyone.

Plan ahead. Be safe when going out alone. Whether your plans are a social event or studying at the campus library, map out a safety plan in advance. Mention your plans to a friend and let someone know if your plans change. Arm yourself with mace or pepper spray, or carry a personal alarm on your key chain.

Avoid going out alone at night.

Try to stay in a group. Let at least one person know where you are going and who you will be with. If you do go out alone, avoid potentially unsafe shortcuts. Travel on well-lit and well-traveled streets. Carry emergency cab fare.

Equip your cell phone. Program important phone numbers (campus security, police, etc.) in your cell for emergencies. Put the word "ICE" in your cell phone with a parent or guardian number programmed. The authorities know to look for this code in case an emergency occurs and they need to get in touch with a relative. Make sure your cell phone is fully charged before going out.

Always trust your instincts. If something seems "off," it probably is. Trust your intuition. Call the police or campus security if something doesn't seem "right."

Don't carry too much money or wear expensive jewelry. Credit cards, a driver's license, and keys should be concealed in a zippered pocket, security belt or stash pouch.

For the first time, your children will be totally responsible for their own personal safety. Are they prepared in case an emergency occurs? Will they feel safe and secure?

Make copies of important papers, credit cards, your driver's license, and insurance cards. Keep the copies in a safe place in case you need to report a lost or stolen document or credit card. Do not go to the ATM at night.

Watch your drink. Do not accept drinks (alcoholic or otherwise) from others. Remember that alcohol is the #1 date rape drug.

When dating, meet at a populated location. Choose a restaurant or other public location. Never meet in a dorm room or apartment.

Check around your vehicle as you approach it. If there is a van parked on one side of your car, get in on the other side. Check under your vehicle and others around you.

Consider a wireless alarm system for your apartment or dorm. It is easy to set up, and you can take it with you when you move.

Practice Internet safety. Use caution when posting personal information on social networking sites such as Facebook. Avoid becoming friends with people you don't know.

Don't succumb to having your photo or personal information published for the campus community. It is not uncommon for upperclassmen and fraternities to use this information to "target" naïve freshmen on campus.

Call home once a week. Let your parents know what you plan for the week, dates, social events, etc. It is just another safety measure to give them peace of mind.

Colleges are generally safe places for our children. Because of this, students tend to let their guard down. Being armed with basic safety awareness can significantly reduce their vulnerability. Bottom line – help prepare your college-bound children to be responsible for their own safety while away at college. They will go confidently and ready for one of the most exciting ventures of their lives.

Remember – book smart is something you can learn anytime; street smart is something you have to know and practice every day of your life.

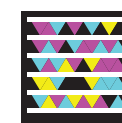
— Mark Bello is an attorney and director of Lawsuit Financial Corporation in Southfield, Michigan.



►From your computer, enter the article ID in the search box at thesafetyreport.com. Article ID: **2106**



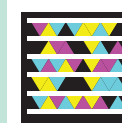
►From your smartphone, scan the tag using TagReader. For more information visit gettag.mobi.



►From your computer, enter the article ID in the search box at thesafetyreport.com. Article ID: **2103**



►From your smartphone, scan the tag using TagReader. For more information visit gettag.mobi.



ALL STATES NEED TEEN DRIVER

Safety Weeks



By Mike Bryant

Nationally, October 17-23 has been designated as National Teen Driver Safety Week. The focus is centered on the use of seat belts. Maybe each state should also dedicate a week to the topic.

On a single weekend in April of 2010, seven Minnesota teens were killed on highways. In many of the cases, the lack of seat belts played a role in the young people being thrown from the vehicles. Hopefully, teens across the country can learn from these horrific losses. Many law enforcement agencies and schools have programs to help educate teens on the dangers of certain behaviors on the roads.

According to AAA and the Minnesota Safety Council, the top six driving risk factors for teens are the following:

- Failing to wear a seat belt - each year, 75 percent of teens killed in vehicles are not buckled up. Wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injury by approximately 50 percent.
- Distraction - text messaging, cell phones, eating, grooming and talking with other passengers increases the risk of being involved in a crash.
- Excessive speed - illegal/unsafe speed is the most common contributing factor in single vehicle crashes for drivers. Teens in particular have difficulty adjusting speed to driving conditions.
- Fatigue - a person who has been awake for 24 hours experiences impairment nearly equal to a blood alcohol concentration of 0.10 percent. Teens often don't get enough sleep.
- Driving at night - mile for mile, 16 and 17 year-olds are about three times more likely to be involved in a fatal car crash at night than during the day.
- Driving with other teens - the presence of teen passengers dramatically increases the risk of crashing.

Experts say a parent, not a police officer, lecturer or driving instructor, will have the most influence on a young driver's safe driving habits. Together, we can work to prevent a future weekend like the one in April on Minnesota highways.

— Mike Bryant is an attorney with Bradshaw and Bryant in St. Cloud, Minnesota.