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Safety groups set to decrease risky teenage driving

By Dee-Ann Durbin
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Teenagers' parents today worry more about their kids driving safely than about drug and alcohol abuse or pregnancy, a survey says.

The study, released Thursday, found that a majority of parents were aware their teenagers were driving in higher-risk situations, such as at night or with other teens in the car, and would be willing to enforce guidelines to limit those situations.

Chrysler Group, a division of DaimlerChrysler AG, conducted the national survey. The automaker is teaming with Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the National Safety Council to produce and publicize guidelines for parents as well as a Web-based driving video game for teens that allows players to compete with other teens and get more points if they follow safety rules.

"Clearly parents are concerned. They want to do something," said Michael Berube, a senior manager of safety planning for Chrysler.

The survey, which questioned 400 parents of 15- to 18-year-olds, allowed them to name multiple concerns. Thirty-nine percent said driving safety was one of their top worries. That was higher than the 31 percent who named drug abuse or 17 percent who named alcohol abuse.

Twenty-five percent of parents worried most about car crashes, which was higher than the 13 percent who named pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases and 11 percent who named violent crime.

Eleven percent were concerned about drinking and driving and 6 percent were concerned about speeding. Other worries included illness, peer pressure, war and suicide.

In all, 59 percent of parents said driving-related issues were

POLL

Teen drivers at risk

Parents fear the risks of teen driving but many do not regulate driving habits of their kids.

What are the health and safety risks facing your teenager that concern you most?

Driving safety
59%

Does your teenager drive from p.m. to midnight without an adult present?

Yes
79%

Does your teenager drive with more than one other teenager as a passenger?

Yes
67%

Note: Survey of 400 parents of 15- to 18-year-old teens conducted in February 2003 with a margin of error of ±4.9 percent.

SOURCE: The Chrysler Group

their No. 1 concern. The nationwide survey was conducted Feb. 26-27 and had a margin of error of plus or minus about 5 percentage points.

The majority of parents — 61 percent — correctly identified car crashes as the leading cause of death for teens. But most parents also said their teens are driving under conditions that are more likely to lead to crashes.

For example, 79 percent of parents allow their teens to drive unsupervised between 9 p.m. and midnight, despite 2001 data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that showed more than half of teen crashes happen at night. Nineteen percent said their teen drive unsupervised between midnight and 6 a.m.

NHTSA data also shows that 63 percent of teen deaths in crashes occur when there are multiple teens in the vehicle. But 67 percent of parents allow their children to drive with more than one other teenager as a passenger.

Judge orders man retested for tuberculosis infection

MACON, Ga. (AP) — Wearing a surgical mask for protection, judge ordered a man to be retested for tuberculosis and to undergo the full course of treatment if he has the disease.

If he refuses to comply, Rickey Martin will be sentenced to six months in jail — long enough to make sure he takes all of his prescribed medication.

Martin, 39, was diagnosed with TB last year after his 10-month-old son died of tubercular meningitis, an infection of the brain and spinal cord caused by the bacteria that also cause tuberculosis. Martin insists what he suffers from is bronchitis.

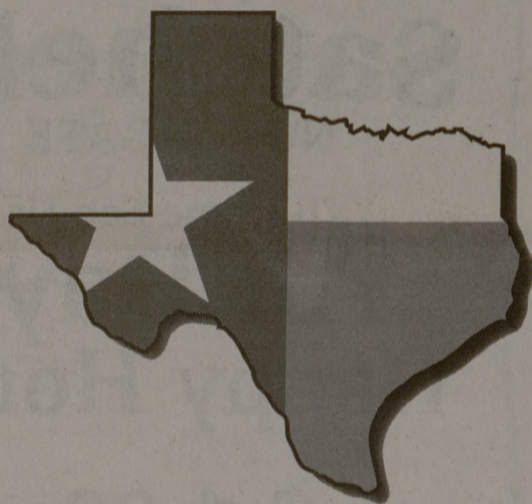
State health officials sought the court order because Martin stopped the required six-month course of treatment nine weeks early, in January.

Tuberculosis is transmitted through droplets spread by coughing and sneezing and is deadly if not diagnosed early and treated. Bronchitis is not contagious and rarely fatal.

Everyone in the courtroom Tuesday wore surgical masks at the judge's request, except Martin's girlfriend and 2-year-old son who do not believe he is ill.

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