

WSP: Graduation Should be a Time to Celebrate, Not Grieve

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The Washington State Patrol wants to remind everyone to enjoy graduation, but not too much. Every year we see tragic and senseless deaths of minors who took their graduation celebrations too far. There is nothing more heartbreaking then to knock on the door of a family to tell them their child has been killed right after graduating. We urge all parents to have "THE talk" with your children before it is too late. I have seen my share of fatal collisions involving kids who just graduated from high school and were celebrating with their friends - Lieutenant Kandi Patrick said the worst collision she investigated was when she had to make next of kin notification to a neighbor, and said that it really hits home when you are face to face with someone you know. Over the last several years there were more than 1,003 fatal collisions involving drivers between the ages of 16-25. Over 90% of young driver involved deaths were vehicle drivers and passengers, with 61% of the deaths being the driver of the vehicle. Over 20% of the deaths involving young drivers occurred in July or August and occurred between 6:00PM Friday to 5:59AM Monday. The number one factor involved in these fatal collisions was speeding, followed by alcohol/drug impairment and distracted driving. (A distracted driver is one who is paying attention to something other than driving. The distraction can be anything from typing a text message to putting a disk in a CD player, or talking on a cell phone.) Washington state law is very clear on minors who drink and drive - if you are under 21 and have an alcohol concentration of at least 0.02 you can be arrested for DUI, which is a misdemeanor. Think about it: 0.02 - A SIP! Is it really worth it? Safety Tips: Put the phone down - don't text and drive Do not let yourself be pressured into drinking Slow down and pay attention to the road and your surroundings Wear your seatbelt