



**Press Contacts:**

Glenn Greenberg  
Liberty Mutual  
617-574-5874  
[glenn.greenberg@libertymutual.com](mailto:glenn.greenberg@libertymutual.com)

Deborah Burke Henderson  
SADD  
508-481-3568, ext. 231  
[dbhenderson@sadd.org](mailto:dbhenderson@sadd.org)

**CAUSE FOR CONCERN FOR SUMMER DRIVERS: SPEEDING, TEXTING, AND  
DISTRACTED DRIVING PREVALENT IN HIGH PERCENTAGE OF TEENS'  
"NEAR MISSES" ACCORDING TO LIBERTY MUTUAL/SADD STUDY**

***Despite Dangerous Behaviors, Teens Most Likely to Blame Other Drivers,  
Weather for Close Calls***

**Boston – June 13, 2011** – Summer is here which means teens are pouring out of the classroom and into their cars. And a new study by [Liberty Mutual Insurance](#) and [SADD](#) (Students Against Destructive Decisions) gives parents reason to pause before they hand over the keys to their newly freed young driver. The 2011 Liberty Mutual/SADD teen driving study reveals an alarmingly high number of young drivers who have had “near misses” while driving and some insight into what may be chief contributors to those events, despite what the teens think. According to the study, 68 percent of teens admit to have narrowly avoided a crash – with more than half of those (56 percent) reporting multiple instances – yet young drivers are more apt to blame external causes such as other drivers or the weather rather than owning up to any personal responsibility in the near-miss.

In the national study of 2,294 high school students, one in three drivers (34 percent) who say they have had a “near miss” point the finger at another driver, while 21 percent say the weather was the primary cause. Yet when asked what they were doing in the car at the time of the incident, teens admitted to a rash of distractive or dangerous behaviors:

- Speeding: 30 percent
- Texting while driving: 21 percent
- Talking to passengers: 20 percent
- Changing songs on their MP3 player: 17 percent

Ironically, only 9 percent of teens believed excessive speed was the primary contributor, 13 percent said [texting while driving](#) was to blame, and 6 percent said their own passengers distracted them.

Further, teens who admit to have narrowly avoided a crash are far more likely than teens who have never had a near miss to report regularly (“often” or “very often”) engaging in dangerous or distracted driving behaviors:

<b>Behavior while Driving</b>	<b>Teens with Near Miss – 68 percent of total</b>	<b>Teens without Near Miss – 32 percent of total</b>
Talking on the cell phone	36 percent	22 percent
Text messaging	33 percent	19 percent
Speeding	46 percent	30 percent
More than 3 passengers	47 percent	33 percent
Changing songs on an MP3 player	61 percent	50 percent

Despite all this, 92 percent of teens consider themselves to be safe and cautious drivers.

“The high prevalence of distracted and dangerous driving continues to be a concern, especially as we head into the summer months when the highest number of driving fatalities occurs,” said SADD Chairman Stephen Wallace. “We know from past Liberty Mutual/SADD research that teens are behind the wheel 44 percent more hours each week in the summer (23.6 hours) than during the rest of the year (16.4 hours), adding some urgency for parents and teens to sit down and review their family rules of the road.”

According to the survey, teens don’t necessarily share the concern. The Fourth of July aside, only 7 percent consider summer driving to come with a high degree of danger, yet it is the most popular time of year for teens to say they have driven under the influence of drugs or alcohol (12 percent). Teens are far more likely to say July 4<sup>th</sup> is a dangerous time to drive (29 percent), yet 8 percent admit to driving under the influence on Independence Day.

### **Change in Behavior?**

Close calls cause the majority of teens who have had near misses (55 percent) to change their driving behaviors, albeit temporarily. In fact, less than half of them (42 percent) say their

renewed commitment to more responsible driving was short-lived (a month or less). Improvements in driving habits most often were reported in the form of paying more attention to other drivers (44 percent); while only 26 percent of teens who have had a near miss say the incident caused them to text less and 13 percent say it led to less speeding.

It takes actually getting in a crash (reported by 22 percent of teens) to result in significant changes in driving habits. Nearly 70 percent of teen drivers who have been in a collision say the experience changed their driving habits, with the majority of them (58 percent) saying those improvements are “forever.”

“The crashes – too often with tragic results – naturally draw our attention and concern, but it’s those brushes with danger that are even more prevalent that should serve as a wake-up call to any driver,” said Dave Melton, a driving safety expert with Liberty Mutual and managing director of global safety. “We don’t want to wait for the crash to happen before we subscribe to [safe driving](#) practices; parents and teens can unite now on a commitment to responsibility behind the wheel.”

### **Helpful Tools and Resources to Navigate the Early Driving Years**

Helpful tools and resources can be found at [www.LibertyMutual.com/TeenDriving](http://www.LibertyMutual.com/TeenDriving), including previous Liberty Mutual/SADD study findings as well as a [Parent/Teen Driving Contract](#) to guide families in the discussion about responsible driving habits and to help customize consequences and rewards for behaviors such as cell phone use, text messaging, speeding, seat belts, alcohol and other drug use, and curfews. The website also provides [state-by-state teen driving laws](#), practice permit tests, and video demonstrations of safe driving techniques. Other important safety information can be found at [www.sadd.org](http://www.sadd.org).

Liberty Mutual’s ongoing campaign to promote safe, responsible driving was recently lauded by Ace Metrix, an authority in television advertising effectiveness. Ace Metrix’s industry study on auto insurance ads, released in March, found Liberty Mutual’s anti-texting while driving ad featuring [Oprah Winfrey](#) to be the most effective of 136 insurance ads over the past year, based on the Ace Score measurement of reaction by randomly selected viewers across the U.S.

### **About the Study**

Liberty Mutual and SADD commissioned ORC International, an InfoGroup Company, to conduct a qualitative and quantitative study to measure teen driving attitudes and behaviors. The study was initiated with a series of four focus groups held in Harrisburg, Pa., and San Francisco, Calif., in October 2010, followed by a survey of 2,294 teens in eleventh and twelfth grades from 28 recruited high schools across the country in January 2011. Overall findings for the study can be interpreted with a 95 percent confidence interval with an error margin of +/- 2.02 percent.

### **About Liberty Mutual Insurance**

“Helping people live safer, more secure lives” since 1912, Boston-based Liberty Mutual Group is a diversified global insurer and third largest property and casualty insurer in the U.S. based on A.M. Best Company’s report of 2010 net written premium. The Group also ranks 82<sup>nd</sup> on the Fortune 100 list of largest corporations in the U.S. based on 2010 revenue. As of December 31, 2010, Liberty Mutual Group had \$112.4 billion in consolidated assets, \$95.4 billion in consolidated liabilities, and \$33.2 billion in annual consolidated revenue.

Liberty Mutual Group offers a wide range of insurance products and services, including personal automobile, homeowners, workers compensation, property, commercial automobile, general liability, global specialty, group disability, reinsurance and surety. Liberty Mutual Group ([www.libertymutualgroup.com](http://www.libertymutualgroup.com)) employs over 45,000 people in more than 900 offices throughout the world.

### **About SADD**

SADD, the nation’s leading peer-to-peer youth education, prevention, and activism organization, is committed to empowering young people to lead initiatives in their schools and communities. Founded in 1981, today SADD has thousands of chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges. SADD highlights prevention of many destructive behaviors and attitudes that are harmful to young people, including underage drinking, other drug use, risky and impaired driving, and teen violence and suicide. To become a Friend of SADD or for more information, visit [sadd.org](http://sadd.org), [parentteenmatters.org](http://parentteenmatters.org) or follow SADD on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

###