

Young drivers have much to work on

By FREE PRESS STAFF

Speeding down the highway with a cell phone in one hand and some fast food in the other – these are a few trademarks of a young driver.

Patrick LeBlanc, centre manager for Young Drivers of Canada's offices in Essex, Leamington and Windsor, said many novice drivers tend to have bad habits behind the wheel.

"Many new drivers are not able to self-restrict when it comes to speed and cell phones," said LeBlanc, who's worked previously as a driving instructor. "There is also distractibility because they're young and see mom and dad using a cell phone or eating while driving. They're watching

them do this for 16 years and think everybody does this so they start doing it."

LeBlanc said the province will soon be introducing new legislation that will prohibit the use of cell phones for G1 and G2 drivers.

Other common problems among new drivers are fixed stares and divided attentions, he said.

"If someone has a divided attention it may take them six to eight seconds to respond," he said. "Eighty-five percent of all crashes are attributed to human error."

The most common type of collision is a rear-end crash, LeBlanc said. They often cause spine and neck injuries.

Since 2004, Young

Drivers of Canada has been incorporating a computer software program into its lesson plans for new students.

The Drive-Fit CD assesses a young driver's strengths and weaknesses by engaging the person in a series of computer-based tests.

Short-term memory, confidence, focus and divided attention are all assessed in the program and rated according to each individual driver.

Instructors can then use the information to specifically design a teaching method for each young driver, based on his or her strengths and weaknesses.

"It gives us a glimpse into a person's brain before they start the car," LeBlanc

said.

The Drive-Fit CD accounts for 12 hours of the Young Drivers' program and includes exercises to improve a person's timing and problem solving abilities.

"This product has changed our instructors," LeBlanc said. "It takes the guesswork out of figuring a person out. That would normally take three to four lessons to see."

LeBlanc said the nationwide program has generated a lot of positive feedback from young drivers, and it's universal exercising methods have also been used by professional athletes to improve their performance.

"It carries over into other parts of life," LeBlanc said.

Idling hurts our wallet, our health and the environment

(NC)—Idling your car, or letting it run needlessly, is a waste of fuel and money, and it damages the environment. Natural Resources Canada provides some pretty convincing data at vehicles.gc.ca.

For example, did you know Canadian drivers could save approximately \$85 a year just by turning off their vehicles instead of idling? Each Canadian driver idles about ten minutes per day, using up almost 90 litres of gas a year, which at one dollar a litre or more adds up. The cost goes up even further in winter when Canadians idle more than 75 million minutes a day. That's the same as idling one vehicle for 144 years.

And what about the old

story that idling uses less fuel than starting and stopping your engine? Not true says Natural Resources Canada. Idling for more than 10 seconds uses more fuel than restarting your engine. In fact, if every Canadian motorist stopped idling for just five minutes a day, every day of the year, we could avoid sending 1.6 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions into the air, and save over \$640 million dollars per year in fuel. That's the equivalent of taking over 490,000 cars off the road for one year!

To learn more about saving money and the environment, visit Natural Resources Canada's website at vehicles.gc.ca or call 1-800-387-2000.

Be tire smart this winter

(NC)—When the snow flies, Canadian drivers have to be prepared. A critical part of that is having the correct tire pressure. Temperature swings, com-

mon across Canada during the fall and winter months, result in significant changes in tire pressure. For every five-degree (Celsius) drop in temperature, tire pressure

drops by one pound per square inch (psi). If for example, if the temperature were to drop to -15C, tires could lose three psi of tire pressure. For some tires that

means a 10 per cent loss in inflation.

Maintaining proper tire inflation consumers can save money at the pumps, reduce harmful emissions, and most importantly increase the safety of their vehicles by ensuring that

tires are used within the correct operating specifications and conditions for the vehicle. As well, because properly inflated tires will last longer, you could save the cost of one or two sets of tires over the life of your vehicle. Visit Natural

Resources Canada's website at vehicles.gc.ca or call 1-800-387-2000 to learn about the EnerGuide Label for Vehicles, the Fuel Consumption Guide and for other tips and tools to encourage fuel efficiency.

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