

Losing control on the skid pad is part of the learning process at the SPARC teen accident avoidance training in Charles Town, WV

photo by
Kate Orme



STUDY PROVES SKILLS HELP Accident Avoidance Training has Big Benefits for Teens

One of the premier accident avoidance schools is BSR housed at the Summit Point Automotive Research Center (SPARC) near Charles Town, WV. The facility provides training for military personnel, state department employees, and police officers. It also offers an accident avoidance course for new teenage drivers, and the payback for students and their parents has been astounding.

Bill Scott, SPARC's owner, just released six years of data in an on-going study that is the first scientific look at the benefits of accident avoidance training for teenagers. The study shows that untrained drivers have about double the likelihood of both being in an accident and in one severe enough that a vehicle has to be towed from the scene; and are about two and two-and-a-half times more likely to be in an injury accident or one involving multiple vehicles.

Bill Scott released the results of this first of its kind on-going study at the September 17 WAPA meeting.

BSR began training state department employees in anti terrorist driving in the 70's. Letters from grads of the program thanked him not just for saving them from terrorists, but for saving them from highway accidents. His Accident

Avoidance School grew out of that experience and it grew from a small portion of the training program to one that was booked solid every time it was offered.

That gave Scott an idea. He went to the State Trooper Academy in Charles Town, WV, where Summit Point Race Track is situated. He proposed training one half of the annual 30 troopers in the graduating class in accident avoidance driving, in return for monitoring the driving records of the entire class. He had a hunch that a class in high speed safe driving would cut the costs of maintaining the State Troopers auto fleet and would cut down on accidents. "The number of accidents troopers have in their early days on the force," Scott said, "is high because they are not trained in high speed driving." From 1993 to 1996 BSR trained 60 rookie troopers in high speed safety from four classes of the West Virginia State Troopers Academy and followed their driving records along with 60 untrained troopers from the same classes. The class included a two-day training on the SPARC facility and included day and night high-speed exercises, including pur-

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suit. The repair costs for police cruisers for the trained group was \$198,419.84 while the untrained group racked up \$350,965.32 in repair bills. Civilian property damage was \$79,200.00 for the trained group and \$136,050.00 for the untrained group.

Scott who started out with a PhD in geophysics from Yale and worked as a post-doctoral fellow at the Carnegie Institute before leaving academe to become a road-racing driver, knew he was on to something with the accident avoidance training.

“I started to think that when your kids or grandkids reach 16 your greatest fear is that they will be killed in an automobile accident and highway statistics bolster this fear. For most of us that fear is underlined by our own remembered crazy stunts on the highway when we first got a driver’s license. Most of remember contemporaries that were not so lucky.”

Scott approached the DOT in Charles Town, WV, the Sheriff’s Department and the State Troopers, in 2000 to get their cooperation in a study which would follow the driving records of Charles Town high school students enrolled in a free accident avoidance course continuing for five years after the course. The enrollment would be on a first-come-first-served basis. The next students who tried to enroll would be a control group.

“We are on the fourth generation of the study,” Scott said, “and all the data points in the same direction. Trained drivers have an enormous advantage in the reduction of accidents and death or injury in an accident.”

Bill Reichardt, head of Business Development at Summit Point Automotive Research Center, filled out the statistics on the study. “We can prove this works,” he said. “We have come up with statistics and a careful scientific method was employed. It is the first and only time that real science has addressed the question of driver training for kids,” Reichardt said.

“Our study is small in terms of the data—469 trained and control group students make up the study. We know that untrained young drivers are at a huge disadvantage in the categories we have studied. However, we also consulted with a

mathematician at the local university to analyze the data for statistical significance; that is, based on the data collect so far how likely is it that the advantages of our accident avoidance training would prevail among drivers not part of our study. The probabilities are between 96.5 percent and 99.9 percent.” The study shows that untrained

drivers have about double the likelihood of both being in an accident and in one severe enough that a vehicle has to be towed from the scene; and are about two and two-and-a half times more likely to be in an injury accident or one involving multiple vehicles.

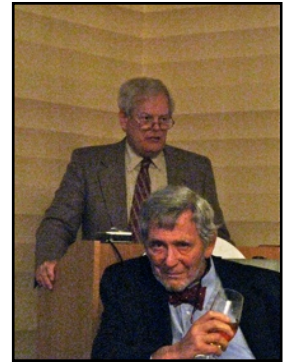
The Accident Avoidance Training puts the teens on the track at highway speeds and presents them with typical highway

emergencies—skidding on a water slick track, emergency braking, swerve control, off road recovery. The teens practice the maneuvers all day on the track until they master them. There is 1 1/2 hours of class room training and the rest of the day is hands on with an instructor and two other students in the vehicle. At the end of the day, each student has a final exam of a six mile drive, with parents in the back seat, facing emergencies every quarter mile that require the responses they learned during the day.

Scott and Reichardt contend that their program is the only one that provides a full day of training in a vehicle, with an instructor always aboard, at highway speeds and **with proven results.**

The program has been named N-CHART (National Center for Highway Accident Reduction Training) Learn & Live, and the goal is to take the program nationwide. Scott and Reichardt are looking for sponsors among insurance companies, manufacturers etc, that can help spread their proven training across the country. Since 1994, BSR has trained about 1,000 teenagers in accident avoidance skills. The cost of the one day course is \$295.

Those critical of such classes fear that teenagers will use their new founds skills to hot dog on the road. Scotts response is that hot dogging is a teenage flaw. However, highway emergencies happen in split seconds. The driver does not have the time to analyze the situation, but must react immediately. The BSR trained driver will have faced similar situations on the track and have a learned response, which will likely avoid or mitigate the accident. These young drivers now have a learned response that will trigger in an emergency.



Bill Reichardt, Head of Business Development for SPARC (top) discusses the statistical analysis of the study following Bill Scott, Owner of SPARC (bottom) discussion of the Accident Avoidance program and its history.

Emergency stopping maneuvers cause smoking tires at the SPARC facility in Summit Point, WV.

photo by Kate Orme



WAPA Grapevine...

AutoExec Magazine closed its doors with the October, 2009 issue. All staff for the magazine have been laid off. After 84 years of *AutoExec*, NADA will function now with only a Web site. WAPA has utilized the abilities of **Marc Stertz** and **Joe Phillips** as presidents of the organization. We have used the hospitality of NADA as a starting point for many of our rally days. We have awarded The Golden Quill to **Mary Ann Shreve** (whose new email address is: maryanneshreve@verizon.net and **Joan Mooney** numerous times for outstanding reporting. We wish all staffers the best of luck and we hope that your skills find a good home. Marc Stertz adds his new contact information: **Marc Stertz**, 6208 Lone Oak Drive, Bethesda, MD 20817, email: marcstertz@yahoo.com, tel: 301 530 4565 – home 301 503 1859 – cell.

The Washington Auto Show will share its space at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center with the 2010 **Electric Drive Transportation Association (EDTA) Conference and Annual Meeting**. The partnership spotlights the environmental and advanced technology issues in the auto industry. WANADA sponsors the Auto Show which will offer preview days on January 25 and January 26. The EDTA conference will run from January 26 through January 28. On January 27 the Auto Show will be open to the public.

EDTA's leadership will participate in the Auto Show's Green Car Summit at a Capitol Hill forum on fuel efficiency on January 25. EDTA will also sponsor a Public Policy Days VIP reception on January 26 the sneak preview day for the press. A highlight of the EDTA Conference will be the Advanced Technology Pavilion, featuring production and concept vehicles, suppliers, and infrastructure providers. The theme for this year's Auto Show is "Automotive Seat of Power." For

more information go to www.washingtonautoshow.com

Vern Parker now of vernarker.com, held his annual "Street Dreams" invitational antique car show September 6 in McLean, Va. The invitational event is a continuation of the Out of the Past Revue car show which featured cars that had been

profiled by Vern Parker in the pages of *The Washington Times* auto section for the last 20 years. Now



October 18
2009 WAPA Rally
9 am
Point of Rocks, MD
Start at Point of Rocks, MD and follow the rally route to Summit Point for lunch, rally winner announcements and a chance to learn some accident avoidance tips from the pros at SPARC at the Summit Point facility. Lunch courtesy of Hyundai

October 21
Nissan
Noon National Press Club
for reservations to both events go to www.washautopress.org

cars – and their owners - that have been featured on his web site are included in this free of charge gathering. There were some beautiful cars on display. The winner of the Owners Choice Award in this year's show was a 1936 Lincoln V12 pictured below. Another stand out entry was the 1936 Cadillac V12, pictured here.



Kimatni Rawlins interviews Jay Leno at the intro of the all-new Jaguar XJ at the UK unveiling at the Saatchi Gallery in London, where Jay Leno hosted an the evenings festivities.

President's Message...

All of us that have, have had or will have teen-age children can relate to the work that Bill Scott and company have engaged upon. The data is compelling, train a kid to have the correct reactions to common situations, like running off onto the shoulder or starting to slide on a slippery road surface. I think the best part of the training is the final test, where the parents are encouraged to ride along in the back seat!

If you are intrigued by the training program then definitely make plans to attend the 2009 WAPA Rally on Sunday, October 18th. This year's Rally route will begin in Point of Rocks, Maryland and finish at the Summit Point Raceway (SPARC's home). At Summit Point we will not only have a wonderful lunch sponsored by Hyundai, but we will be treated to demonstrations by the SPARC staff on some of the key aspects of their Accident Avoidance training.

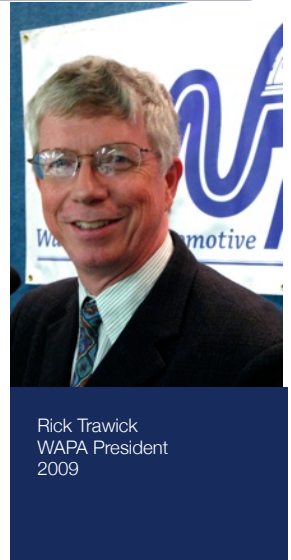
We will also have several press cars available for local test drives. Come on out for a fun and informative day.

The very next week will be our regular monthly meeting, this month hosted by Nissan at the National Press Club on Wednesday, October 21st.

Register early for both events at www.washautopress.org.

Enjoy the ride!

Rick



Rick Trawick
WAPA President
2009

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