

braking, and other parameters that indicate aggressive driving or driving errors. Some EDRs even sound alarms when the vehicle exceeds certain preset limits. They cost about \$200, plus installation.

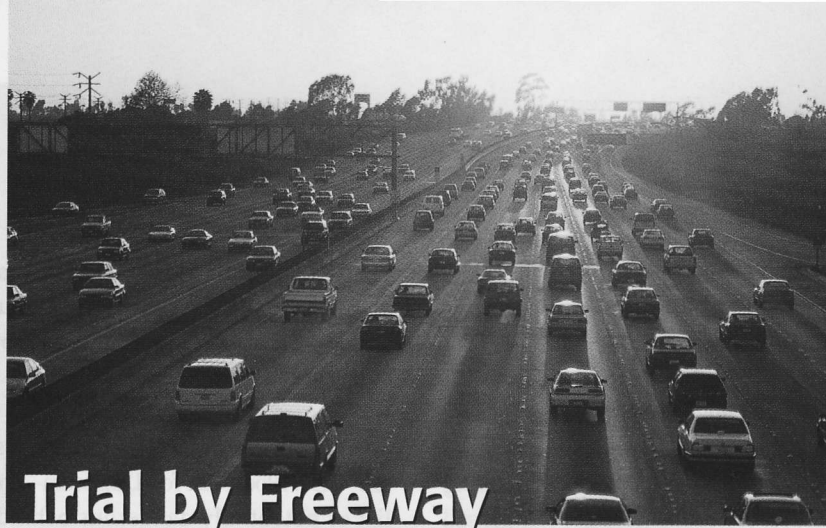
Teens might balk at what they consider electronic eavesdropping. One way to overcome this objection is to be willing to monitor your own driving electronically and regularly compare results with your teen. You might even gain new insight into your own driving habits. Don't install an EDR surreptitiously. Secrecy only defeats the EDR's real purpose—discouraging risky behavior. To be effective, you must commit to faithfully downloading EDR readouts, and discussing them with your teen.

Remember, an EDR is not a substitute for regular drives with your teen to check his or her progress and provide feedback. And don't be disappointed if you don't get perfection. New drivers make mistakes, and parents should expect them. That's what learning and gaining experience is all about.

**10** Let your teen use the safest car. The least experienced driver should use the safest car, which may not be the family's oldest car. Size matters in a collision, and large sedans make up in crashworthiness what they lack in cool. The latest safety technology—such as side air bags, antilock brakes, and stability control—helps, too. Don't allow your teen to drive small, high-powered sports cars; convertibles (which have higher injury rates); or SUVs (which are more likely to roll over).

No steps you take can guarantee that your teen will never be in a collision. But taking an active role in your teen's driver education—even after he or she has obtained a license—is the most important thing you can do to make him or her a safer motorist. **W**

*Veteran automotive writer Joseph D. Younger has parented two drivers through their teen years. But he still worries about them.*



## Trial by Freeway

### Parents' commitment helps a teen become a skillful driver

By Karen Telleen-Lawton

**H**unched in the backseat of our black Toyota, I watched freeway call boxes whiz by, grimly figuring I'd soon be walking to one. My daughter Emily's face flashed in and out of darkness under the intermittent overhead lights. The gas gauge had read empty for 20 miles, but my husband, Dave, and I sat mutely, recording our observations on little notepads.

We'd lived in Colorado when Emily passed driver training two years earlier. She learned to navigate the mountain roads in slippery ice storms, as well as in thick spring snows. But after moving back to California, we faced new driving dangers. The Southland is plagued with a quagmire of interlocking freeways, lurching between racing speed and gridlock. Boulder has one single Denver-bound highway.

Now 17, our daughter begged us to let her drive to the beach in Corona del Mar to see a friend. But Corona del Mar was five freeways away from our home near Pasadena. My husband and I thought about Emily negotiating multiple freeway changes, driving in unknown territory, and coming home in the dark, and forbade the trip.

After considerable haggling and promising on all sides, Emily agreed to allow her father and me to accompany her. We agreed not to talk and instead monitored her progress silently with scribbled notes. To prepare for the trip, she would have to study relevant street and freeway maps.

We set out early on a Sunday afternoon in March. The drive west went pretty smoothly. Emily suffered a moment's hesitation on a freeway transfer but managed to make a safe exit. When we reached our destination, she spent a jubilant day at the beach with her friend.

The return trip in early evening, however, was rocky from the start. Emily was the same confident, competent driver, but her nascent navigating skills conspired with

the darkness to thwart her progress. First, she dashed through the Pacific Coast Highway intersection looking for Highway 1 (which it is). Arriving at a T intersection a couple of miles out of her way, she consulted the map and got back on track. We silently willed her to check the gas gauge, which had read empty when we retrieved her at the beach.

Finally, Emily realized she was running on fumes. She snapped on the right-turn signal, maneuvered calmly off the freeway, and rolled into a gas station at the base of the off-ramp.

But as she re-entered the freeway after refueling, the next freeway change was suddenly upon her and we were shunted east before she could maneuver west. She exited at the first opportunity, ready to cross over and retrace. But this particular off-ramp had no on-ramp.

Emily wandered about a mile to find an on-ramp and was on her way home once more. Her last snafu was going south rather than north after exiting the Pomona freeway. She turned around and headed home, where we arrived exhausted and relieved.

Over the next few days, Dave and I used our notes to debrief her, praising her driving skill and calm demeanor, as well as eliciting her suggestions for improvements. She needed no prodding to express how much more is involved in reaching a destination than just steering. Now we were on the same side, and we gradually widened her driving range with confidence.

A fence in the high school senior lot did get in her way a few months after the infamous freeway test. Despite those inevitable bumps, my husband and I are proud to have raised a confident, independent, and safe driver. Emily now enjoys car-free living in Washington, D.C., but I'm sure she navigates the subways carefully.