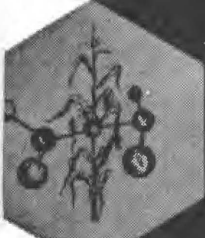


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Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Extension Division

CHEMICAL-DRUG-PESTICIDE

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DRUGS-DRINKS-DRIVING

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You Could Have Caused This

We don't mean "goof balls", "bennies", "co-pilots", LSD, "pot", or excessive cocktailing -- the dangers associated with these and driving are well known. We do want to consider however, the effects of many over-the-counter remedies as well as many commonly prescribed medicines which may cause dizziness, drowsiness, headaches, inability to concentrate, sudden overwhelming exhaustion, light-headedness, blurred vision or nausea. The wide-ranging side effects of many drugs vary greatly from person to person, but remember -- you could be the hardest hit.

The Journal of the American Medical Association recently warned that drugs ranging from aspirin and antihistamines to tranquilizers and antibiotics may slow a driver's reaction time and impair his performance behind the wheel.

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A man in Texas was taking a new anxiety-reducing drug under prescription. He smashed his car into a bridge because he was "blinded by lights". A week later he backed his wife's car into a tree. Another man plowed into a parked car because he had "misjudged the distance". A woman on the same drug totally wrecked her car, fortunately without serious injury to herself or her two small children. A man who was receiving relief from the pills picked up three speeding tickets in one week, backed his car into a tree, and soon afterwards crashed into a parked car. In short, within a 90-day period, out of 68 patients taking the drug, 10 were involved in minor and 6 in major accidents.

To make matters worse, when a single before-dinner cocktail collides with a drug an "escalating" or "potentiating" reaction may take place with violent results. Some doctors estimate that one tranquilizer pill plus one drink has the effect of four or more drinks alone.

When a drug is prescribed, always ask your doctor if it will effect your vision or change muscular coordination or alertness. Will it cause dizziness? Will it react with other drugs or common remedies you are now taking? Is it all right to have a cocktail while taking the medicine? How long do the effects of the drug last?

Take drugs and medicines only as directed and heed all precautions, including those on side effects which may cause a traffic tragedy.

