

Courting Disaster I

All case studies took place in Britain since 2003. Names have been removed.

There is, of course, information in each case that we do not have, which would affect a court's final decision.

- Police in Edinburgh stopped Lord A, a former Scottish Office Minister on his way home from a function. When he was breathalyzed he was found to have been drinking and driving.
- The case of a drunken motorist who fled after a crash, leaving his five month old son crying in the car was heard at a Magistrates Court. Mr B, age 24, had already been banned for drinking and driving two months before the crash. He was more than twice over the legal limit. Mr B admitted driving with excess alcohol, whilst disqualified and uninsured, along with careless driving and failing to stop after an accident.
- At a High Court in Scotland the case of Mr C, age 19, an off-duty soldier who crashed his car and killed a teenage friend, was heard. He had been racing another driver on a road when the incident happened. His friend who died was one of three passengers thrown from the car when it went out of control and rolled into a field.
- Mr D, an experienced driver, knocked down a 4 year old boy whilst he was twice over the legal drink-drive limit. A Sheriff Court heard that the child was left with brain injuries. After the Court Hearing the boy's family described the sentence as "a joke".
- A mother killed her 13 year old daughter in a car crash whilst she was three times over the legal drink-drive limit. A Crown Court in England heard the case of Mrs E, whose car skidded off the road into a tree, killing her daughter who was sitting beside her.
- A teenager from the Birmingham area killed a friend when he lost control of his car on a bend at high speed and crashed into an taxi. The Crown Court heard that Mr F was driving at twice the speed limit. He admitted causing death by dangerous driving.
- Footballer Mr G was pulled over after he was caught by police, speeding at 92 mph on a motorway in Leeds.
- A teenager who was high on drugs killed a mother and daughter in a high speed crash. Mr H, age 18, had been driving at 70mph on the wrong side of the road when he hit their car head on. Mr H admitted two counts of causing death by dangerous driving.
- A lorry driver who caused the death of a newly-wed couple denied falling asleep at the wheel. A Welsh Crown Court heard that Mr J had spent the previous night asleep in his cab. Before the collision the lorry was straying onto the hard shoulder. He lost control, crashing it through the central reservation. He admitted causing the death of the young couple.
- Mr K, ran away after hitting a 6 year old girl having driven a stolen car through red traffic lights. He had 89 previous motoring convictions. It was the second time he had been charged with causing death by dangerous driving.



Courting Disaster 2

Motorists who kill someone due to speeding and/or drink or drug driving can expect tougher sentences following new government moves to crack down on illegal driving. This is in the light of pressure from bereaved families, campaign groups and MPs.

- Look at each incident again and note down all the consequences for the individuals involved; their jobs, their relationships, their families, now and in the future? Take into consideration both the implications for those who are victims of such incidents and the offender, and his or her family.

Discuss in your group and jot down your answers on paper.

Courting Disaster 3

Points for further discussion

- If you had influence either as a politician or a professional, what would you advise prisons and young offenders institutes to do to effect a change in the behaviour of these drivers?
- A new offence of causing death by careless driving – perhaps as a result of using a hand-held mobile phone, falling asleep while driving or eating at the wheel, is being proposed in a consultation paper. What do you think would be an appropriate sentence for such offences?

Jot down your answers in the space below.