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Teen struck on roadway, dies

Pedestrians warned to be careful, watch for traffic



Kenosha County Sheriff's Department investigators review the scene of a fatal accident on Highway N where the driver of this vehicle crested a hill and saw a 15-year-old Central High School student walking in the road too late to avoid striking her. (photo by earlene frederick)

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The death of a 15-year-old Bristol girl who was struck from behind by a vehicle while walking on a Paris highway Thursday night prompted the Sheriff's Department to issue warnings to pedestrians and bicyclists about being on unlit rural roads after dark.

Michelina Combs was walking west with a girlfriend in the 17100 block of 38th Street (Highway N) about 9 p.m. when a car driven by Denise Heckel, 42, came over a hill and struck her, according to the Kenosha Sheriff's Department.

A witness said the girl and the girlfriend, who lives near the scene, were walking in the roadway, said Sheriff's Sgt. Gil Benn. He said the friend heard the car approaching and tried to pull Combs toward her and off the roadway. The road there has a narrow shoulder and no street lights.

The driver told officials she tried to avoid hitting the child. The other girl was not struck. No citations are being issued.

Combs was a Central High School student. The friend, whose name was not immediately released, also is a Central student, Benn said.

Heckel and her husband, Eugene, were on their way home to Silver Lake.

Deputies said Heckel showed no signs of driving impairment and did agree to have blood drawn for investigation purposes.

Benn reminded residents about being cautious while walking and bicycling on streets, especially at night and in rural, unlit areas.

He said state law requires pedestrians to walk on the left side of a road, facing traffic, if there are no sidewalks. The girls were walking on the right side.

"Walking near roadways is a risk as it is, but if you're walking or bicycling at night, you should take extra precautions," he said. "As we approach summer, more people are going to be out, and you have to be aware of that."

Benn recommended that pedestrians:

- n Stay away from the pavement.
- n Carry/wear a light and have it turned on.
- n Wear reflective clothing.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation website included these tips:

- n Make eye contact with drivers and make sure they can see you.
- n Pay attention.
- n Don't wear dark clothing.

DOT also said drivers are required to:

- n Yield to pedestrians when driving across a sidewalk or into an alley or driveway.
- n Yield to pedestrians crossing an intersection or



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crosswalk on a "walk" signal or green light. Yield to pedestrians crossing a highway within a crosswalk at an intersection without controls.

Drivers also should not pass vehicles stopping at intersections or crosswalks for pedestrians or bicyclists to cross the road.

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