

# The *Washington Post*

## Watch your driving, kids. The parents are watching.

By Matt Zapposky  
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WASHINGTON — Ken Richardson does not have to ride in his 17-year-old daughter's Ford Escort to know when she takes a turn too fast. The camera system installed in her car will e-mail him about it.

The cameras are among the latest tools in the struggle to reduce teen car crashes, a problem that has been particularly vexing in Maryland. Last year, crashes involving drivers ages 16 to 20 killed 112 people in the state. Such accidents are often caused not by alcohol or overt recklessness but by simple driver inexperience. The problem has persisted despite efforts by lawmakers to restrict teen driving privileges.

The camera, mounted on the front windshield, captures footage of what is happening outside as well as in the vehicle. It saves about 20 seconds of that footage only when its sensors are triggered by unusual driving maneuvers such as sudden braking or swerving. Saved footage is transmitted back to DriveCam via a cellular network. DriveCam experts review the videos, add tips for the young drivers and post them to a Web site. Parents receive an e-mail alert when the videos are posted.

The camera can capture anything going on in the car, but the company uploads only footage that involves unsafe driving. If an event is captured that is embarrassing to the

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teen . . . then we're not going to return it to the family," Carpenter said.

In the month or so since the camera was installed, Richardson's daughter has not been caught on camera doing any-

thing too bad, but the camera has been a sore point. "I feel like I'm being baby-sat, like I'm being watched constantly. It drives me nuts," said Stacie.

Richardson has tried every possible angle to convince his daughter that the camera is a good idea. He has tried telling her she could earn new driving privileges by avoiding major incidents. He has appealed to her sense of benevolence, telling her that being a part of the study could save others' lives. And he has tried telling her that when she gets older, she'll want the same kind of device for her kids.

The limited research conducted on DriveCam elsewhere in the country seems to support her dad. DriveCam tracked 25 new drivers using the camera and feedback system for more than a year starting in 2006. The six people who triggered the camera most frequently in the beginning, did so 86 percent less later on.