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Inhalants blamed for teen driver's crash in Rochester Hills

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The teenage driver passed out as he inhaled gas from a can of Dust Destroyer, trying to get high as he cruised through Rochester Hills, three passengers in tow.

The 16-year-old Oakland Township resident's teenage friends, who also had been huffing the keyboard cleaner, tried unsuccessfully to wake him as they went hurtling down Brewster Road at about 1 p.m. Sunday.

The Pontiac Grand Prix hit a retaining wall, went airborne and plowed into a house on Lassiter Drive, caving in a garage wall, the Oakland County Sheriff's Office said.

No one was killed, but the driver and a 17-year-old passenger from Rochester Hills were injured.

Inhaling — or huffing — toxic gases and vapors from products such as keyboard dust cleaner is a popular method of getting high among young people, said Harvey Weiss, executive director of the Tennessee-based National Inhalant Prevention Coalition.

It's attractive, he said, because the materials are readily available in most homes, schools and offices. They're also inexpensive or free and it's an easy way to get high fast.

But huffing can damage the brain, heart and other organs and it can kill even on first use.

"It's like playing Russian roulette with your life," Weiss said.

Dust cleaners, such as the one the teens were huffing on Sunday, do not contain air, as advertised. Instead they contain chemicals under pressure, which, when inhaled, go almost immediately to the brain.

All the teens involved in Sunday's accident were released to their parents pending charges. A pipe commonly used to smoke marijuana and a 40-ounce beer bottle also were found in the car, police said. "They could have all died," Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said in a news release, "and also killed innocent victims who were in the path of the runaway car."

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