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SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Almost Half of Teen* Drivers Involved in Fatal Crashes Die

As you get ready to drive, prepare for a young person to drive, or if you have a teen driver in your life, think about and emphasize the importance of driving safely and the enormous responsibilities that driving entails.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 14- to 18-year-olds in the United States. In 2011, 2,105 teen drivers were involved in fatal crashes. Almost half (45%) of those teen drivers died in the crashes.

Obeying the law and practicing safe driving behaviors are essential. One-fifth (20%) of the teen drivers killed in fatal crashes in 2011 did not have a valid driver license—the most basic driving law—at the time of the crashes. Invest in your safety and your teens' safety by learning and teaching teens to always obey driving laws—including Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) restrictions—and reinforce these laws through your own family guidelines.

Teens learn from, and model their behavior after, their parents—including driving behavior. Novice drivers rarely crash while adults are supervising their driving. Unfortunately, the first six months of *unsupervised* driving are the most hazardous for novice drivers. Parents and teens must work together and commit to learning, practicing, and continuing safe and lawful driving behaviors.

*For this document, the term *teen driver* refers to drivers age 14 to 18. In 35 States a teen can obtain an unrestricted license before 18 with or without driver's education. In 25 States a teen who takes driver's education can get an unrestricted license at a younger age. Only a few States still allow 14-year-olds to have a license.

For more information, visit:
www.nhtsa.gov/Teen-Drivers

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

NHTSA
www.nhtsa.gov

THE PROBLEM

Teaching TEENS to Drive:

Take your teen on many practice driving sessions.

Teach your teen how to moderate speed for conditions.

Practice driving at night, in inclement weather, and in many different traffic situations.

Keep a log in the car to track the actual hours and conditions.

Consider your State's supervised driving recommendations as the minimum. **More practice is better.**

What data tells us

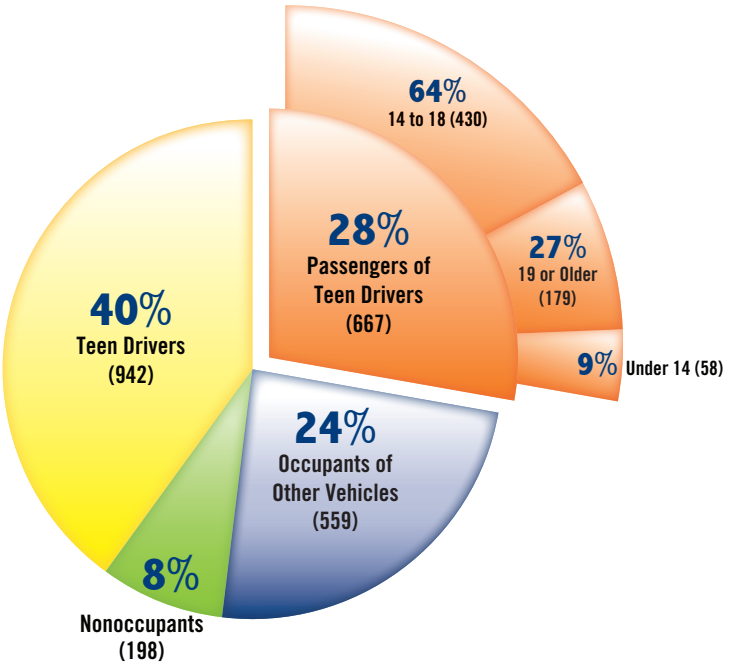
- In 2011, teens 14 to 18 represented 7 percent of the U.S. population. Many of these 21 million young people were preparing to drive or beginning their driving careers.
- In 2011, 20 percent of 14- to 18-year-olds died in motor vehicle crashes while driving with an invalid license.
- Speeding was a factor in crashes for 35 percent of the teen drivers in fatal crashes in 2011.
- Over half of the teen drivers of passenger vehicles who died were unrestrained.
- One teen's behavior can affect his peers' behavior. When the teen driver in a fatal crash was unrestrained, almost four-fifths of that driver's teen passengers were unrestrained as well.
- Although all States have Zero Tolerance Laws for drinking and driving under age 21, 505 people died in crashes in which 14- to 18-year-old drivers had alcohol in their systems.
- Twelve percent of teen drivers involved in fatal crashes were distracted at the time of the crash. A total of 270 people died in these crashes.
- Fatal teen driver crashes are most frequent between 3 and 8 p.m., but remain high until midnight.

What we know about licensing

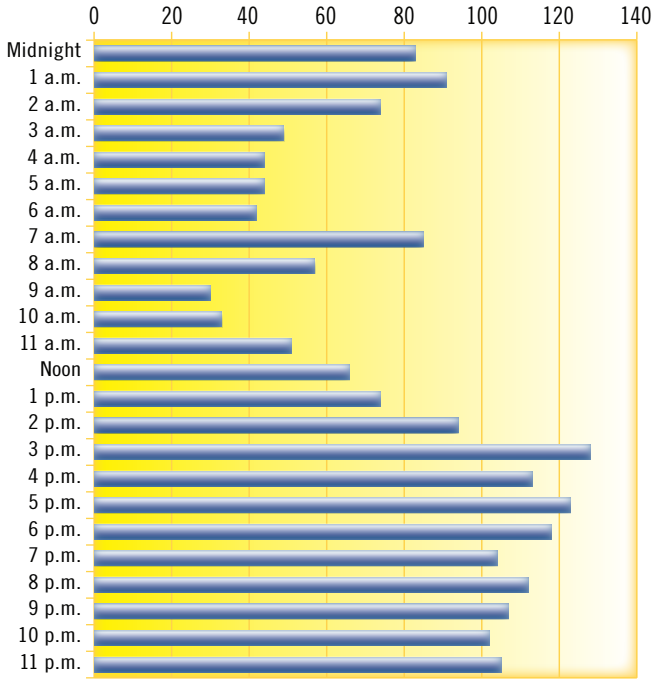
- GDL systems give novice drivers extended experience and protection by gradually introducing more challenging driving conditions over time. A Fresh Look at Driver Education in America (www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811543.pdf)
- All States and the District of Columbia have three-stage GDL systems—largely focused on restricting travel times, numbers and ages of passengers, and potentially risky behaviors.
- One NHTSA study found that a teenage driver was 2.5 times more likely to engage in potentially risky behaviors when driving with one teenage passenger and three times more likely with multiple teenage passengers. The Effect of Passengers on Teen Driver Behavior (www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811540.pdf)
- Licensing requirements for new drivers are more involved now than in years past. Many parents do not know the number of supervised driving hours required by their States, or that they may need to sign a form certifying that their teens obtained the required amount of practice. Role of Supervised Driving Requirements in Graduated Driver Licensing Programs (www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811550.pdf)
- Thirty-seven States and DC restrict hand-held phone use for novice drivers. Forty-seven States and DC ban texting while driving for novice drivers.
- All States set 21 as the legal age for purchasing alcohol and make it illegal for drivers under age 21 to operate a motor vehicle with any detectable amount of alcohol.

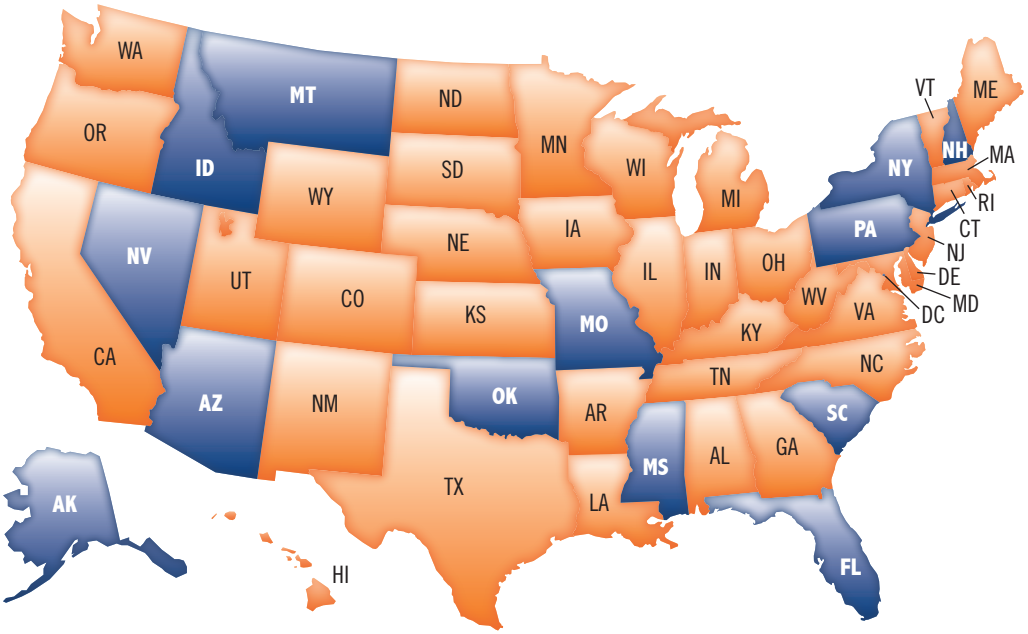
THE FACTS

People Who Were Killed In Young Driver Crashes



Hourly Number of Fatal Crashes Involving a Teen Driver by Time of Day





Hand-Held Cell Phone Bans for Novice Drivers*

- Novice driver hand-held cell phone ban
- No novice driver hand-held cell phone ban

Territories Not Included in the Map:
Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

No novice driver hand-held cell phone ban for all three

**Total States: 37 Total States + DC*
Primary: 31 + DC
Secondary: 6 (AR, CA, MD, NE, SD, VA)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We know what works

NHTSA's *Countermeasures That Work* recommends effective actions that communities can take to reduce crashes involving young drivers (www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811727.pdf).

Parents can

- Set ground rules and outline the consequences for breaking them in a Parent-Teen Driving Contract (www.safercar.gov/parents/drivingRULES.htm) (www.distraction.gov/content/get-involved/parents.html). Surveys suggest that teens whose parents impose driving restrictions typically engage in less risky driving and are involved in fewer crashes.

- Know the GDL restrictions placed on your teen's license and enforce those limits. Restrict night driving and passengers, prohibit driving while using the phone, and use seat belts on every trip. Learn about your State's GDL requirements (www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/license_laws.html).
- Talk with your teens and explain that .08 grams per deciliter BAC laws apply to adult drivers. Before they are 21, drinking alcohol is illegal because of Minimum Drinking Age laws, and driving after consuming *any* alcohol is illegal because of Zero Tolerance Laws in all States.
- Be a good role model and practice safe driving yourself. Visit www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/teens to download material from NHTSA's Parental Responsibility Toolkit.

Young drivers can

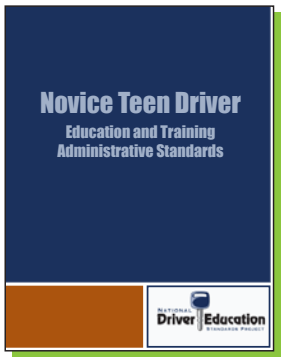
- Know the restrictions placed on your license at each license phase. These restrictions are there to help you gain experience and improve your driving skills.
- Wear your seat belt every trip, every time. It is your best defense in a crash.
- Never accept a ride with an impaired driver and *don't let your friends drink and drive*.
- Don't use your phone while driving. Ask a passenger to call or text if necessary, or stop in a safe place to use your phone.
- Remember that driving is a privilege, not a right.

Law enforcement officers can

- Take advantage of opportunities to enforce GDL restrictions with young drivers.
- Work with coalitions to educate parents and novice drivers about the State's requirements.

States and communities can

- Refer to the Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education (ANSTSE) administrative standards (www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/TeenDriverETAS-1.pdf) as guidance for State driver education and training programs.



- Conduct a Driver Education Program Technical Assessment to identify potential improvements.
- Visit www.TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov for media material you can download.

For more information, visit:
www.nhtsa.gov/Teen-Drivers

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