

2019 National Teen Driver Safety Week

FACT SHEET/TALKING POINTS – TEEN TARGET AUDIENCE

October 20-26 is National Teen Driver Safety Week, a great time for you to review safe driving habits with your family members and fellow teen drivers. Whether you're driving a car, truck, or SUV, and whether you've just earned your license or have had it for years, the rules stay the same, and you should put down the keys if you don't know them.

Data shows that, in your age demographic (age 15-18), the greatest dangers in the vehicle are often alcohol consumption, inconsistent or no seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, and driving with passengers in the vehicle.

Teens, take some time to review these facts, and help us at the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration spread the word about teen driving safety.

Know the Facts About Teen Driver Fatalities

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens (15-18 years old) in the United States, ahead of all other types of injury, disease, or violence.
- In 2017, there were 2,247 people killed in crashes involving a teen driver (15-18 years old), of which 755 deaths were the teen driver – a 3% decrease from 2016.
- Teens: Others may influence your driving choices, but it's ultimately up to you to make the right decisions. The following are some of your biggest risks behind the wheel.
 - **Impaired Driving:** While you're too young to legally buy, possess, or consume alcohol, in 2017, 15% of teen drivers involved in fatal crashes had alcohol in their system. But alcohol isn't the only drug that can keep you from driving safely: Marijuana, like other drugs, affects a driver's abilities to react to their surroundings. Driving is a complex task, and marijuana slows reaction times, affecting the driver's ability to drive safely. Illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter drugs can impair driving and have deadly consequences.
 - **Seat Belts:** Seat belts are designed to keep you safe, whether you're sitting in the front or back seat, by preventing you from being ejected from your vehicle in the event of a crash. But they only work if you use them. In 2017, there were 539 passengers killed in passenger vehicles driven by teen drivers, and

more than half (60%) of those passengers who died were NOT buckled up at the time of the fatal crash. Even more troubling, when the teen driver was unbuckled, 87% of the passengers who died were also unbuckled.

- **Distracted Driving:** Distractions while driving are more than just risky – they can be deadly. In 2017, among teen drivers involved in fatal crashes, 9% were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. The use of mobile devices while driving is a big problem, but there are other causes of teen distracted driving that pose dangers as well, like adjusting the radio, applying makeup, eating or drinking, or distractions from other passengers in the vehicle.
- **Speeding:** In 2017, more than one-quarter (27%) of all teen drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash, and males were more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than females.
- **Passengers:** Teen drivers transporting passengers can lead to disastrous results. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of passengers in a car. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behavior triples when traveling with multiple passengers.

Make Smart Decisions When You're Driving

Teens: Driving is a new and exciting step toward independence and adulthood. When your parents talk about the importance of safe driving habits, make sure you're listening. Their rules, advice, and lessons learned could prevent you from being in a crash. Keep the following in mind when discussing driving safety with your parents:

- From October 20-26, join other teens and parents across the country in a national dialogue for National Teen Driver Safety Week.
- Get the facts and use them to make sure your friends are safe drivers and respectful passengers. Your influence could save their lives.
- If you have a provisional driver's license, be sure you are aware of the restrictions in your state's graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws regarding transporting passengers, driving at night, and other key safety areas.
- Remember that driving is a privilege, not a right, and must always be taken seriously.
- Know the rules of the road before you drive.

Remember the Rules of the Road:

1. Don't Drive Impaired.

Drinking before the age of 21 is illegal in every state, and alcohol and driving should never mix, no matter your age. Marijuana slows a user's reaction time and affects a driver's ability to drive safely. Remember that drugs – illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter – can impair driving and have deadly consequences. Know how over-the-counter medications affect you before you drive.

2. Buckle Up – Every Trip, Every Time. Everyone – Front Seat and Back.

It's important to buckle up on every trip, every time, in the front seat and the back. Before you put your car in drive, check to make sure everyone is buckled.

3. Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel. All the Time.

You should never text, dial, or use mobile apps while driving. Place your phone out of reach when you're on the road. Turn on the "Do Not Disturb" or similar feature on your phone. Remember that distracted driving isn't limited to phone use. Other passengers, audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distractions for teen drivers. Loud music is distracting, too. Be sure to always take your headphones off before driving. You need to be able to hear another vehicle's horn, or the siren from an emergency vehicle.

4. Follow the Posted Speed Limit.

Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, especially for teens who lack the experience to react to changing circumstances around their cars. Obey the posted speed limit and know that every time the speed you're driving doubles, the distance your car will travel when you try to stop quadruples.

5. Passengers.

With each passenger in the vehicle, your risk of a deadly crash goes up. Many states have laws for new teen drivers about how many passengers can be in the car, and who can ride with a teen driver. Know the law before you hit the road; it may prohibit you from having any passengers in the vehicle with you.

Talk to Your Parents About Safe Driving Year-Round

If your parents are talking to you about safe driving habits, make sure you listen – don't tune them out. Your parents' constant reminders about these powerful messages will positively impact your driving habits.

Get creative! Talk to your parent or family members about safe driving habits. You can also create a parent-teen driving contract that outlines the rules and consequences set by your parents. Hang the signed contract in a visible place as a constant reminder about the rules of the road.

If you and your parent are going somewhere together, ask to drive. Make sure you are following the rules set by your parent.

Remember, driving – for everyone, teen and adult alike – is a privilege, not a right. If you are having a difficult time following the rules, it may be time for your parents to take away the keys and review the basics. Your safe driving can mean the difference between life and death – for you, your passengers, and other people on the road.

For more information about National Teen Driver Safety Week and to learn more safe driving tips, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving.