



Safe Teen Driving: Distractions

Parents
lead the way by role modeling safe driving. Complete a parent-teen driving agreement and set limits for new teen drivers.

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for teens in the United States. Parents can help by role modeling safe driving behavior every time they drive. Parents can also reduce their teens' risk by working together with their teen to complete a parent-teen driving agreement. The agreement sets driving limits and consequences if limits aren't followed. It is very important that once an agreement is created that it is then enforced by parents. There are several key risks that new teen drivers face:

Distractions

A driver is a distracted driver when anything takes their attention away from the task of driving, whether inside or outside of the vehicle. Distractions increase anyone's risk of being in a crash but are especially risky for new, inexperienced teen drivers. Distractions can include, but are not limited to, using a cell phone for talking, texting or apps, eating, adjusting the radio, reading and grooming.

Passengers

Research shows that young passengers in a vehicle increase the risk of a fatal crash for new teen drivers. Young passengers can distract a beginning driver and lead to risk-taking behaviors. Teen drivers already have a high crash risk when driving alone because they are inexperienced drivers, and adding friends in the car can increase this risk even more. The National Safety Council recommends that parents do not allow their teen driver to drive with any young passengers for the first year of driving, including not driving with siblings.

Young passengers
increase crash risk. Each additional passenger adds to the risk.

- Teen drivers in fatal crashes have been shown to be more likely to make driving errors, speed, or carry passengers in comparison to older and more experienced drivers.
- Teen or peer passengers increase crash risk for teen drivers. Each additional passenger adds to the risk.
- Young passengers can cause distractions.
- Young passengers may influence risk-taking behaviors of young, inexperienced drivers. Teen drivers may overestimate their driving ability even before adding passengers.
- Alcohol and other drug use may be more likely to impact attention and decision-making when one or more passengers are present.

Teen Drivers

have high rates of cell phone use while driving.

Teens lack

the experience, judgment, and maturity to assess risky situations.

A Parent-Teen Agreement

can be found at:

http://www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey/pdf/Parent_Teen_Driving_Agreement-a.pdf

Cell Phone Use

Studies that observe drivers on the roads show that about 1 out of 10 drivers are talking or manually texting or typing on a phone at any moment. Young drivers have the highest rates of phone use while driving (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2013). Whether holding a phone in your hand or using a hands-free earpiece or built-in car system, talking or texting on a phone while driving is a distraction. Research shows drivers have slower reaction times and can miss seeing up to half the information in the roadway around them (University of Utah).

In a December 2011 survey about cell phone use and distracted driving among young drivers age 18 to 20, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported:

- This age group had the highest incidence of crash or near-crash experience compared to all other age groups.
- This age group reported the highest level of phone involvement at the time of a crash or near-crash.
- Many incorrectly believe talking on a cell phone while driving makes no difference to their driving, but do believe texting or email does.
- The highest rate of those that continue to drive while they text was seen in those age 18 to 20 years old – 73% text while driving.

Inexperience

Research shows that teens lack the experience, judgment, and maturity to assess risky situations. Help your teen avoid the following unsafe behaviors:

- *Speeding*: Make sure your teen knows to follow the speed limit and adjust speed to road conditions. Sometimes road and weather conditions require slower speeds than the posted speed limit.
- *Tailgating*: Remind your teen to maintain enough space behind the vehicle in front of them to avoid a crash in case of a sudden stop.
- *Insufficient scanning for hazards*: Emphasize the importance of always knowing the location of other vehicles on the road around you, scanning the roadway ahead for potential hazards and being prepared to respond.

Additional Resources:

- www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey
- <http://distracteddriving.nsc.org>
- www.nhtsa.gov
- www.distraction.gov
- www.driveithome.org

