Young Drivers

In 2007, 7,650 people were killed in crashes involving young drivers between the ages of 15 and 20. According to the latest 2005 mortality figures from the National Center for Health Statistics, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for those between the ages of 15 and 20. Although young drivers represent only 6.5% of the nation's licensed drivers, they are involved in 12.2% of fatal crashes. The National Safety Council urges all parents to familiarize themselves with the risks associated with young, inexperienced drivers.

Facts to Know

- Traffic crashes are the number one cause of death among children and young adults.
- About 3,200 young drivers age 15-20 are killed every year in traffic crashes. More than 250,000 young drivers are injured.
- Young drivers are involved in fatal traffic crashes at over twice the rate as the rest of the population.
- Exceeding the posted speed limit or driving at an unsafe speed is the most common error in fatal accidents.
- About 30% of crashes killing young drivers involve alcohol.
- More than 1,000 young drivers lose their lives every year in crashes because they were alcohol impaired.
- It is illegal in *every* state for a person under 21 to buy and/or publicly possess alcoholic beverages.
- All states and Washington, D.C. have zero tolerance laws. It is illegal for a minor (under 21) to purchase alcohol, so no amount of alcohol should be allowed in an underage driver.
- Zero tolerance laws are typically set between .00 and .02 *per se* as opposed to .08 or .10 for drivers 21 and older. *Per se* means that regardless of outward signs of intoxication, the amount of alcohol detected in the driver determines legal intoxication.

Graduated Licensing Saves Lives

- Since inexperience is a leading factor in traffic crashes involving youth, graduated licensing makes good sense. This licensing system ensures that young drivers accumulate driving experience under controlled circumstances.
- Graduated licensing includes three steps: Learner, Provisional (Intermediate), and Full Licensure. Each of these steps includes certain restrictions tied to the permit.

Restrictions address things such as: the use of alcohol (zero tolerance), nighttime driving, teenage passengers, all occupants must wear safety belts, permit holder must remain crash and conviction free for a certain amount of time, etc.

- Currently, 44 states and the District of Columbia have implemented graduated driver licensing.

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