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National Teen Driver Safety Week: Parents Are the Key to Teens Driving Safely Parents Should Talk to Teens and Be Good Role Models Behind the Wheel

NEW YORK, Oct. 15, 2025 — The National Road Safety Foundation and SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), the nation's premier youth health & safety organization, are partnering to remind parents that National Teen Driver Safety Week, Oct. 19 - 25, is a good time for parents to have a conversation with their teens about safe driving habits.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens in the United States. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports 2,611 people were killed in crashes involving a teen driver in 2023, while more than 170,000 people were injured in crashes involving a teen driver. Inexperience is a major factor in teen crashes, with teens more likely than older drivers to underestimate or not be able to recognize dangerous situations. They also are also more likely than adults to make critical errors that can lead to serious crashes.

"Parents need to be proactive and begin a conversation about safe driving," said Michelle Anderson, director of operations at the National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF).

"Teen Driver Safety Week is more than raising awareness—it's about stepping up and making real change," said Shourya Shavkani, President of the SADD National Student Leadership Council. "Through SADD and NRSF, we have the resources to lead conversations with our peers and create initiatives that can truly save lives in our schools and communities."

Among key issues that deserve parental discussion are:

1. **Impaired Driving:** While teens are too young to legally consume alcohol, nationally 19% of teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2021 had alcohol in their system. Marijuana also affects a driver's ability to react to their surroundings. Remind teens that driving under the influence of any impairing substance — including many prescription drugs or over-the-counter medication — can have deadly consequences.

2. **Seat Belts:** Wearing a seat belt is a simple way teens can stay safer in a vehicle, yet too many teens aren't buckling up. Fifty-one percent of the teen drivers who die in crashes are unbuckled. Parents should encourage their teens to always buckle up and confirm that all passengers are buckled before the vehicle moves.
3. **Distracted Driving:** Distraction is a major factor in teen crashes. One in three teens who text say they have done so while driving. Research has found that dialing a phone number while driving increases a teen's risk of crashing by six times, and texting while driving increases the risk by 23 times. Distracted driving isn't limited to cell phone use. Other passengers, adjusting audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving can be dangerous distractions for any driver, but especially for teens.
4. **Speed:** Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, but it's especially deadly for teens with less experience. Nearly one-third (32%) of all teen drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash. Data shows that males were more likely to be involved in fatal speeding-related crashes than females. Remind teens to always drive within the speed limit.
5. **Passengers:** Passengers in a teen's vehicle can lead to disastrous consequences. Research shows the risk of a fatal crash dramatically increases in direct relation to the number of passengers in a vehicle. The likelihood that a teen driver will engage in risky behavior triples when multiple passengers are in the same vehicle.

Parents should also encourage their teens and all family members to speak up if in a vehicle being driven unsafely. "Speaking up can save lives," Anderson said.

Surveys show that teens whose parents have discussions on safe driving behavior and set firm rules are typically engaged in less risky driving behaviors and are involved in fewer crashes.

"Parents often complain that their teens don't listen to them," said Anderson, "but studies show they watch what we do. It's up to us as parents to be good role models by demonstrating safe driving behavior all the time, long before teens even think about getting their learner's permit."

The National Road Safety Foundation offers tips for talks with teens in its Passport to Safe Driving, available free online at <https://www.nrsf.org/passport-safe-driving>.

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. (NRSF) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization that for more than 60 years has been dedicated to reducing crashes, deaths and injuries on our nation's highways by promoting safe driving habits through greater public awareness.

NRSF programs deal with distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency and pedestrian safety. The Foundation also works with key youth advocacy groups and sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities. For more information or to download free programs, visit www.nrsf.org.

SADD, the nation's premier youth health & safety organization, has worked for more than 40 years to empower teens, engage parents, mobilize communities, and change lives around the issues of traffic safety, substance use, and personal health and safety. Through a national network of peer-led chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges, SADD equips students with the resources they need to advocate for change on their campuses and in their communities. Visit www.sadd.org.

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