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National Teen Driver Safety Week

Parents Are the Key to Safe Teen Driving

NEW YORK, Oct. 18, 2022 — National Teen Driver Safety Week, which runs from October 16-22, provides the perfect opportunity for parents to talk with teens about safe driving habits. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and The National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF) encourage parents to discuss safe driving habits with their young drivers and to be sure teens know the rules of the road before they get the car keys. Ultimately, parents are in control.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens (15-18 years old) nationwide. There were 2,276 people killed in crashes involving a teen driver in 2020; 748 of the deaths were the teen driver. In 2020, an estimated 90,564 teen drivers were injured in traffic crashes and an estimated 153,566 people were injured in crashes involving a teen driver, accounting for almost seven percent of all roadway injuries that year.

“Parents play a critical role in teen driver safety and in communicating important driving safety information,” said Michelle Anderson, director of operations for the National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit that’s been promoting safe driving behavior for 60 years. “New teen drivers are still gaining experience behind the wheel, which increases the chance of dangerous situations for the teen and other roadway users around them, which is why it’s so important for parents to have these discussions with their teens.”

NHTSA lists the top teen driver safety risks as:

1. **Impaired Driving:** Nationally, 19% of teen drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2020 had alcohol in their system. Teens need to be reminded that driving under the influence of any impairing substance — including illicit or prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medication — can have deadly consequences.
2. **Seat Belt Safety:** More than half (52%) of the teen drivers who died in crashes in 2020 were unbuckled and nine out of 10 of passengers who died were also unbuckled.

3. **Distracted Driving:** In 2020, among teen drivers involved in fatal crashes, seven percent were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. Parents need to remind teens that distracted driving isn't limited to cell phone use. Other passengers, audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distractions for any driver.
4. **Speed Limits:** Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, especially for teens who are less experienced. In 2020, almost one-third (31%) of all teen drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash.
5. **Passengers:** Many states have graduated driver licensing rules that limit the number of passengers a new driver may take in a vehicle. Parents should make themselves aware of GDL restrictions and discuss them with their teen drivers.

Teens should also be encouraged to speak up if they are passengers in a vehicle that's being driven unsafely. A new website from NRSF and We Save Lives has information and offers several scenarios to illustrate how passengers can effectively speak up when safety is at risk. Visit www.nationalpassengersafety.org.

"Teens learn the rules of the road in driver education, but it's through parent conversations and their home environment that the lessons are driven home and the rules enforced," said Michelle Anderson. "Teens also learn safe driving behavior by watching their parents drive over the years before teens even begin learning to drive, so adults need to be good role models and set a consistent example of safe driving behavior."

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. (NRSF) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization that for 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.