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What your teen driver needs to know to survive

Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers, ahead of all other types of injury, disease, or violence. To shed light on this epidemic and reduce the number of lives lost, Riverside University Health System – Public Health wants to draw public attention to National Teen Driver Safety Week, October 15-21.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that nationwide in 2015, 1,972 drivers, age 15-18, were involved in fatal collisions. In 2015, in California, 283 teens were behind the wheel at the time of fatal collisions, and 63 percent of those young drivers were at fault.

Teen Driver Safety Week will help parents focus attention on setting rules for their teen driver before allowing them to get behind the wheel. Parents and guardians must set firm driving rules to impact their teen's driving behavior. They can be the difference between life and death.

Inexperience is one of the leading causes of teen collisions. The most important thing a parent can do for a new teen driver is to stay involved in their driving life. Take frequent drives with your newly licensed teens to monitor their progress. Parents can reduce the dangerous and sometimes deadly behaviors, such as alcohol consumption, driving without seat belts, speeding, carrying extra passengers, and driving distracted.

"Cell phone use continues to be a serious and often deadly distraction for all drivers, but it's a significant problem among young, inexperienced drivers," said Rhonda Craft, Director of the

California Office of Traffic Safety. “If you’re a parent, guardian, or mentor to a teen driver, lead by example and encourage them to put the phone down and focus on the road. No text message or social media post is more valuable than their lives or the lives of others around them.”

As part of its commitment to educating the motoring public, there are programs for teen drivers and their families:

- *Start Smart* conducted by law enforcement personnel is a driver safety education class that targets new and future licensed drivers between the ages of 15-19 and their parents/guardians.
- The CHP has released a mobile application (app) for *Start Smart*, designed to assist young people through the process of obtaining their California driver license. The app includes a step-by-step guide covering everything from the Department of Motor Vehicles Driver Handbook and the final steps for obtaining a provisional license, to ultimately achieving an unrestricted California driver license.
- *Every 15 Minutes* focuses on high school juniors and seniors, challenging them to think about drinking, driving, personal safety, the responsibility of making mature decisions, and the impact their decisions have on family, friends, and many others.
- *Impact Teen Drivers*, a non-profit organization parented with CHP is dedicated to saving lives through evidence-based educational programs that support good decision-making strategies behind the wheel.
- *California Friday Night Live Partnership*, working with high schools and middle schools to educate teens about traffic safety and impaired driving awareness including Town Hall meetings, prom related campaigns, and parent awareness programming.
- *The Power to Youth and the Power of Parents*, MADD’s multi-sensory high school assembly education program highlighting the dangers of teen impaired driver.
- *Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)*, educating and bring awareness to California communities of the human toll caused by alcohol related crashes to high school and middle school programs.

Public Health is aware of the importance of role models in a youth’s development. Parents and other setting the example and education of new drivers and their families is regarded as a critical function to help keep everyone safe while driving.

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