

Changes to Graduated Driver Licensing Law for Teens

January 1, 2015

Key Messages

1) Traffic crashes are a leading killer of Minnesota teens.

- A major reason is that teens are the most inexperienced drivers on the road.
- They're more likely to take risks, be distracted by teen passengers and not wear their seat belts as much as other motorists and passengers.

2) It is so important for parents to stay involved in their teens' driving, just as they would stay involved in how they're kids are doing in school and with other activities.

- All driver education programs are required to offer parent awareness classes that provide information on teen driving risks, teen driving laws and adult influences on teen driver behaviors.
- As a parent, don't put convenience ahead of safety. Just because teens have their licenses doesn't mean they're ready for every driving situation. Parents should continue to supervise their teens driving after they're licensed.
- The key to developing safer teen drivers is to provide supervised experience — a lot of "windshield time," discuss driving responsibilities with your teen, establish clear family driving rules and follow through with consequences when warranted.
- We encourage parents to practice with their kids well beyond the new minimum requirements of the law to ensure they're prepared to drive in the many driving and weather conditions they will eventually experience on their own.

3) The new driver licensing requirements will better prepare teens to be safe behind the wheel.

- The parent awareness class is critical to understanding today's teen driving risks, Minnesota's teen driving laws, and how to help your teen become a safer driver.

- The extra required driving practice hours and the supervised driving log help teen drivers become more experienced and help parents track progress and areas to improve. The driving log also becomes a part of the teen's driving record.

Background Information

New Requirements in the Graduated Driver Licensing Law

- Starting January 1, 2015, there are new requirements to get a provisional license if the teen is under 18. Teens must provide a supervised driving log when taking their driving test that's signed by a parent. The log must verify they drove under the supervision of an adult licensed driver for a minimum of 50 hours, of which 15 hours were at night.
- The practice requirement drops to 40 hours, of which 15 hours were at night, if parents attend a parent awareness class and submit their certificate of completion for the parent class at their teens' road test.
- We encourage parents to practice with their kids well beyond the new minimum requirements of the law to ensure they're prepared to drive in the many driving and weather conditions they will eventually experience on their own.

Teen Drivers Are at Risk

- A teen driver is more likely to be involved in a traffic crash than an adult driver. The greatest crash risk occurs during the first months of licensure.
- The key to reducing teen crash risks is for parents to establish and enforce family rules that minimize exposure to high risk situations, especially during the first year of licensure.
- Distracted driving is a serious safety issue for all drivers, but especially for teen drivers who are inexperienced behind the wheel.
- Teens are more likely to engage in distracted driving or risky behaviors such as using their mobile devices, carrying other teen passengers, eating or searching radio stations.

How Parents can help during the Pre-License Learning Stage

- Don't rush the training process. Just because a teen has a license, it doesn't mean they're ready for every driving situation or condition.
- Nothing can replace the many hours of supervised driving experience they need while learning how to handle most of the challenges they will eventually encounter independently.
- Understand Minnesota's graduated driver licensing laws, teen driving risks, driving responsibilities and liabilities, and discuss them with your teen.
- Using these laws as a minimum standard, establish your own family rules for when, where, how, and with whom your teen may drive by creating a Parent-Teen Driving Contract.
- Follow through with consequences when problems arise.

How Parents can help once their Teens are licensed

- Make decisions with your teen's safety as the highest priority. Even after receiving their license, teens are not prepared to drive on their own in every situation or during times of higher crash risk.
- Consider additional driving privileges after your teen demonstrates his/her ability to drive safely, adhere to laws and follow your family rules.
- Privileges should be based on limiting their exposure to crash risks. If problems arise after additional privileges are granted, go back to the prior rules.
- Continue to monitor and train your teen even after licensure — give them exposure in a variety of conditions and environments — city, rural, rain, snow, etc.
- Know and enforce the laws on limiting nighttime driving, passenger limitations and cell phone bans.
- Being a passenger in another teen's car can put your teen at risk. Peer pressure among teens can be both positive and negative. Make sure your teen knows it's okay to say something if uncomfortable while riding with a friend and help him/her practice what to say in these situations.

Look at the Facts

- Teens are increasingly making safer choices when behind the wheel or when riding with another teen driver. In 2013, there were 33 teenage traffic deaths (13–19), an 18 percent decrease from the 40 teen deaths in 2012. Teen deaths in Minnesota have decreased overall in the past decade — there were 88 teen deaths in 2004.
- Teen drivers are over-represented in crashes due to factors like inexperience, distractions, speeding and taking risks.
- In 2013, teens (16- 17) made up just 2.5 percent of all licensed drivers. Yet, they made up 4.5 percent of all drivers involved in traffic crashes.
- In 2013, there were 6,040 teen drivers (16-17) involved in traffic crashes. That’s more than 16 crashes each day!
- In 2013, only 50 percent of teen motor vehicle occupants (13-19) killed in motor vehicle crashes were known to be buckled up.
- In 2013, 12.5 percent of all teen (16-17) drivers involved in fatal crashes were known to be drinking.
- Last year, driver distraction was cited most often (21 percent) as the contributing factor in crashes involving teen drivers of any vehicle. Failure to yield the right of way and illegal or unsafe speed were each listed next at 13 percent.
- Typically, most fatal and serious injury crashes involving teen drivers occur during summer months, when teens tend to do more driving.
- When it’s winter time, there’s typically an uptick in property damage crashes involving teen drivers. Last year, nearly one out of four (23 percent) teen-involved crashes happened during December and January.
- Afternoons are particularly dangerous for teen drivers. In 2013, 43 percent of all teen-involved crashes occurred from 2:00 – 6:00 p.m.

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