



# Teen Driver Safety

## FACT SHEET

### Teen Safe Driver Week

October 16 – 22, 2011

#### The Situation:

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the United States.
- Over 730,000 young drivers ages 15 – 18 were involved in police-reported crashes in 2009. In these crashes:
  - an estimated 280,000 people were injured
  - 2,805 people were killed
- All 50 states and the District of Columbia have implemented some form of a graduated driver licensing (GDL) system for young drivers.
- There has been little research on teens' behavior as they transition from supervised to unsupervised driving or of the characteristics of crashes during this period.

#### Recent Teen Driving Studies:

##### *Measuring Changes in Teenage Driver Crash Characteristics During the Early Months of Driving*

- Examined crashes during the first three years of licensed driving for North Carolina teens originally licensed at age 16 or 17.
- Analyzed rates of specific types of crashes in relation to the length of time that the driver had been licensed. This analysis identified types of crashes that both occurred frequently and appeared to be amenable to reduction through better instruction and practice prior to licensure.

##### *Transition to Unsupervised Driving*

- In-depth study of 38 families with novice teenage drivers in North Carolina.
- Collected data using in-vehicle cameras installed in vehicles for first six months of licensed driving.
- Video was recorded when the camera was triggered by vehicle movements (e.g., acceleration, braking, swerving) that exceeded threshold levels; a total of nearly 6,000 video clips were analyzed.
- Researchers examined the external driving environment (traffic, weather, light, etc.) and the in-vehicle driving environment (passengers, loud music, etc.) that led to "close calls" and other incidents that triggered the camera.

#### Key Findings:

##### *Measuring Changes in Teen Crashes During Early Months of Independent Driving*

- Teen drivers are 50% more likely to crash in the first month of having a license than they are after a full year of experience. Drivers in their first month are nearly twice as likely to crash as they are after two years experience.
- 57% of crashes in which a teen was partially responsible during the month involved three common mistakes – failure to reduce speed, inattention, and failure to yield.



Teens have the highest crash rate of any group in the United States.



### *Transition to Unsupervised Driving*

- In the early months of unsupervised driving, the majority of teens exhibit good driving habits however the study did find instances of texting behind the wheel, horseplay with passengers and running red lights.
- While a very small number of instances of deliberate risk-taking behavior were observed, the vast majority of “close calls” involved judgment errors that seemed to be indicative of inexperience and failure to anticipate changes in the traffic environment. A common scenario involved the teen braking hard after having initially failed to notice that traffic ahead was slowing or stopped.
- Once teen drivers obtain their license to drive independently, the passenger make up shifts dramatically.
  - Parents and other adults were only present in 3% of the video recorded during licensed independent driving. This represents a dramatic shift after having an adult present all the time during the learners stage
  - 65 percent of the time, teen drivers were without any passengers. However, when passengers were present at least one was a peer (61 percent), compared to sibling passengers (36 percent).

### **Related Resources:**

In-vehicle video clips complementing the studies are available on the Foundation’s website by clicking [here](#).

Other useful teen driver resources:

[Driver-Zed](#) – An interactive risk-management training tool designed to help teens recognize how to react in a variety of driving scenarios.

[TeenDriving.AAA.com](#) – This AAA site provides state-specific information to help parents and their teens navigate the learning-to-drive process. There is tailored content for each step in the process, from keeping safe even before teens get learner’s permits all the way through teens driving on their own.

[AAA StartSmart](#) – AAA StartSmart is a newsletter system designed to help families get through the crucial period when teens are learning to drive safely during their first year or two of licensed driving. Key component is the AAA Parent-Teen Driving Agreement.

[Dare To Prepare](#) – Dare to Prepare is a 90-minute pre-permit presentation for parents and teens that provides critical information teens need to know before they take the wheel. This presentation walks attendees through the steps necessary to obtain a permit and a driver’s license, and offers useful tools to help parents and teens through the learning-to-drive process. A shorter online version of the program is now available at [www.teendriving.aaa.com](http://www.teendriving.aaa.com).

[Teaching Your Teen To Drive](#) – AAA’s Teaching Your Teens to Drive program comes complete with an illustrated in-car handbook, and live-action 60-minute DVD that parents can use to help them conduct state-required supervised practice driving.