



St. Lawrence County Traffic Safety Program Newsletter



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Parents as Driving Teachers

Many of us remember when we sat behind the wheel for the first time after getting our driver's permit. If we were like most teens, our parents were our very first driving instructors. This seems to be true for today's teens as well.

Research from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) finds that 87% of US parents play a "significant" role in teaching their teens to drive. As driver education programs dwindle, about 4 in 10 teen drivers report that the *only* pre-license driving instruction they received was from a parent.

Although we all tend to think of ourselves as good drivers and blame the "other guy" for near-misses, the fact is that many drivers never themselves learned the rules of the road, especially with respect to rights of way. Also, it's not uncommon for

experienced drivers to develop bad habits, such as forgetting to signal a turn, or failing to stop *behind* the stop line at an intersection. Those bad habits teach our teens by example, even if we preach otherwise.



The study points out another flaw in the way most parents tend to teach driving to their teen. Instead of being specific, parents tend to offer general advice. For example, a parent may say, "pay attention" but fail to mention some of the specific crash-prevention skills that are needed to avoid collisions, such as scanning ahead for hazards, and adjusting speed for road and traffic conditions.

The CHOP researchers analyzed a database of teen driver crashes to find out what happened right before the collision. Teens were at fault in about three-quarters of the crashes, and found that distractions, unsafe speed, and failure to scan the road ahead were the most common errors. Scanning involves actively observing the road environment well ahead and on both sides of the vehicle, not just the road directly in front of the vehicle. According to CHOP, it is a "higher-level skill that experienced drivers develop over time."

The authors propose that teen crash risk could be reduced if hazard response and detection skills were taught sooner in the learning-to-driver process. Driver Education teachers recommend that teens take formal driver instruction, but

if they can't, the teens should take the 5-hour Pre-Licensing course as soon as possible after getting their permit. That way, they can learn skills and rules of the road correctly so that they won't be reinforcing poor driving habits.

Other factors that are shown to reduce teen driving deaths and injuries are graduated license laws, as these prolong the learning period and reduce exposure to some of the more dangerous situations. Night driving, the presence of teen passengers, and use of electronic devices are also factors in teen crashes.

For more on the study, or for resources on teen driving for parents, teens, and/or educators, visit the web site www.teendriversource.org/ or call the St. Lawrence County Traffic Safety Program at 379-2306.

Teen Crashes in NY State

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death involving teens.
- Every day approximately eight teen drivers in New York are treated at a hospital due to vehicle crashes.
- Young drivers put more than themselves at risk: in collisions involving NYS teen drivers almost 3/4 of crash deaths were someone *other than* the teen driver.
- Teens are more likely to speed, drive distracted and allow shorter headways (the distance from the front of one vehicle to the back of the next) than older drivers.
- Every day eight people are killed or seriously injured in crashes involving speeding or distracted teen drivers.
- Almost 40% of fatal crashes involving teen drivers occur between 9:00 p.m.–midnight and noon–3:00 p.m.



From NYSDOH Bureau of Injury Prevention, Get the Facts About Sixteen and Seventeen Year-Old Drivers in New York State

Move Over, Part 2

Last year, the "Move Over" law took effect in New York State. This important legislation was adopted to protect law enforcement and emergency responders while working near the road.

The law states that motorists must move away from the roadside to an adjacent lane when driving past an emergency vehicle with its red lights flashing. If there is no lane, or if it's not possible to safely move

over, the motorist must slow down when passing such a vehicle.

As of January 1, 2012, the law has been extended to motorists traveling near a vehicle with amber lights. This includes tow trucks, mail delivery vehicles, and highway crews.

Drivers convicted of violating the law are subject to fines up to \$275, a sentence of up to 15 days in jail, and three license points. Other fees

and court surcharges may also apply.



Similar laws are common in other states and provinces. Roadside deaths have been reported for New York State Troopers, an Onondaga Co. Deputy assisting a disabled vehicle, and a tow truck driver working along the Thruway.

Many New York State web sites have changed their web addresses (URLs)

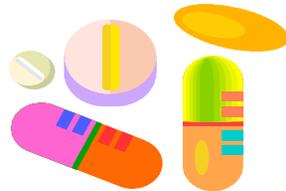
Safeny.com is now Safeny.ny.gov/

Prevalence of Drugged Driving

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has been studying the prevalence of drug use behind the wheel, and has found evidence that drugged driving is commonplace on US highways.

In 2007 NHTSA published results of the National Roadside Survey (NRS), a random-stop roadside survey that collected oral and/or blood samples from drivers who were willing to provide specimens. These were analyzed for the presence of illegal drugs and for alcohol. The survey found that drugged driving was as prevalent as driving under the influence of alcohol. Of all weekend nighttime drivers who provided specimens, 12.4% were positive for alcohol while 16.3% were positive for illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter drugs that had possible effects that could impair driving ability. Only 2.2% of drivers had blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) at or above the

legal limit of intoxication in all states (0.08 g/dL). Of the drivers who tested positive for drugs, 11.3% were positive for illegal drugs, 3.9% for medications and 1.1% for both illegal drugs and medications. The most common illegal drugs were cannabis (8.6%), cocaine (3.9%) and methamphetamine (1.3%).



In another study, NHTSA conducted drug tests on drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2009. These results, released in 2011, showed that one-third of all drivers tested were positive for drugs. Although drug involvement does not imply driver impairment or indicate that drug use was the cause of the crash, the frequent presence of drugs among drivers is concerning to policymakers and safety advocates. Many drugs, includ-

ing illegal drugs, prescription medicines, and even over-the-counter drugs can have effects that impair driving.

Drunk driving is reliably detectable through breathalyzer tests. State driving laws have specific BAC cut-off levels of 0.08% (0.04% for commercial drivers). The BAC levels reflect the correlation between the level of impairment and the blood alcohol level (that is, as the alcohol level increases, the behavior becomes more impaired).

The relationship between illegal drug use and impairment is even more complex than for alcohol. There is not necessarily a linear relationship between blood levels of a drug (or drug metabolites) and impairment. Differences exist between the amount of drugs in a person's system and the level of the perceptual, cognitive and motor skills needed for driving.

In New York State, it is illegal for a driver to operate a

motor vehicle while impaired by alcohol and/or drugs. Many people think chemical test evidence is required to prove you were intoxicated or impaired. However, a police officer's testimony about your driving, appearance, and behavior when arrested can provide enough evidence alone to convict you, even without a chemical test. Police agencies also have access to specially trained Drug Recognition Experts who can determine intoxication by drugs other than alcohol (or in addition to alcohol).

Conviction of a drug-related driving offense involves license penalties, a fine and surcharges, and/or jail time. Increased penalties apply for those under 21 years old, who drive with a child under 16 in the vehicle, or in cases of severe intoxication. When drugs and/or alcohol contribute to a vehicle-related injury or death, additional felony charges can apply.



Source: NYS DMV Driver's Manual, and NHTSA web site