

# Safety Fact Sheet



These programs offered by the Utah Safety Council offer practical strategies to reduce collision related injuries and fatalities on Utah roadways.

## WHAT A PARENT WITH TEENAGERS CAN DO

With or without a Graduated Licensing Law, parents can establish rules based on the graduated model. In particular:

**Don't rely solely on driver education.** Driver education may be the most convenient way to learn skills, but it doesn't necessarily produce safe drivers. Poor skills aren't always to blame. Teen attitudes and decision-making matter more. Young people naturally tend to rebel. Teens often think they're immune to harm, so they don't use safety belts as much and they deliberately seek thrills like speeding. Training and education don't change these tendencies. Peer influence is great but parents have much more influence than they are typically given credit for.



**Know the Law.** Become familiar with restrictions on beginning drivers. Enforce the rules. A person under 17 years of age may not operate a motor vehicle on the highway between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. Passengers must be immediate family members of the teen driver until six months from the issue date of their driver license or when they reach 18 years of age. Exemptions are when accompanied by a licensed driver 21 or older in the seat next to the driver, to or from work, to or from a school activity (home to school only), agricultural operations, or an emergency.

**Take a Class.** To properly prepare teens to drive, parents must have a clear understanding of the risks they face. That's why the National Safety Council developed the Alive at 25 Parent Program. This two-hour Internet-based course is designed for parents of teenagers who will be getting their learner permit or driver license. This course identifies those risks, and helps parents reinforce basic driving skills and good decision making to help teens become safe, responsible and defensive drivers.

**Restrict Night Driving.** Most young drivers' night time fatal crashes occur from 9 p.m. to midnight, so teens shouldn't drive much later than 9 pm. The problem isn't just that such driving requires more skill. Late outings tend to be recreational, and even teens who usually follow the rules can be easily distracted or encouraged to take risks.

**Restrict Passengers.** Teen passengers in a vehicle can distract a beginning driver and/or lead to greater risk-taking. Because young drivers often transport their friends, there's a teen passenger problem as well as a teen driver problem. About 6 of every 10 teenage passenger deaths (59%) during 2003 occurred in crashes with a teen driver. While night driving with passengers is particularly lethal, many fatal crashes with teen passengers occur during the day. The best policy is to restrict teenage passengers, especially multiple teens, all the time.



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**Supervise Practice Driving.** Take an active role in helping your teenager learn how to drive. Plan a series of practice sessions in a wide variety of situations, including night driving. Give beginners time to work up to challenges like driving in heavy traffic or on the freeway. Supervised practice should be spread over at least six months and continue even after a teenager graduates from a learner's permit to a restricted or full license.

**Remember that You Are a Role Model.** New drivers learn a lot by example, so practice safe driving. Teens with crashes and violations often have parents with poor driving records. **Require Safety Belt Use.** Don't assume that belt use when you're in the car with your teen means belts will be used all the time, especially when your child is out with peers. Remember that belt use is lower among teenagers than older people. **Insist on belts all the time.** **Prohibit Drinking.** Make it clear that it's illegal and highly dangerous for a teenager to drink alcohol. While alcohol isn't a factor in most crashes of 16-year-old drivers, even small amounts of alcohol can impair teen drivers.

**Choose Vehicles for Safety, Not Image.** Teenagers should drive vehicles that reduce their chances of a crash and offer protection in case they do crash. For example, small cars don't offer the best protection in a crash. Avoid cars with performance images that might encourage speeding. Avoid trucks and sport utility vehicles — the smaller ones, especially, are more prone to roll over.