**2019 NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK**

**TEEN AUDIENCE**

**SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]**

**CONTACT: [Name, Phone Number, E-mail]**

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**Stay Safe: Know the Rules of the Road**

**[City, State]** — Earning a driver’s license is an exciting time in any teen’s life. Soon, you’ll be thinking about graduation, college, and careers. We at the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration want to help make sure you get through one of the major milestones in your life. We’re teaming up with **[Local Organization]** during National Teen Driver Safety Week, October 20-26, 2019, to encourage teen drivers to follow the rules of the road while behind the wheel.

Check out these stats: Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens 15 to 18 in the United States, ahead of all other types of injury, disease, and violence. In 2017, there were 2,247 people killed in crashes involving a teen driver (15-18 years old), of which 755 deaths were the teen driver — a 3% decrease from 2016. In fact, in 2017 there were an estimated 93,000 teen drivers injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes, and an estimated 293,000 people injured in crashes involving a teen driver, accounting for an estimated 11% of all those injured that year.

“We know you’re excited to have the keys in hand after all these years, but we really want to take this time to talk about the importance of safe driving habits and of following the law,” said **[Local Leader]**. “We’re counting on your parents to help us share this information, and we’re counting on you to listen to it. During this week, we’ll be promoting five rules of the road you should follow to be a safer driver and to avoid crashes.”

Impress mom or dad: Visit NHTSA.gov and read our [tips](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving) on teen driving safety. Your parents will likely want to discuss with you the most dangerous and deadly driving behaviors for teen drivers: alcohol, lack of seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, and driving with passengers.

Teens, your parents play an important role in helping you take smart steps to stay safe on the road, but ultimately it’s up to you to make the right decisions behind the wheel. The following five rules are a great starting point in your driver education — helping you become a safer driver.

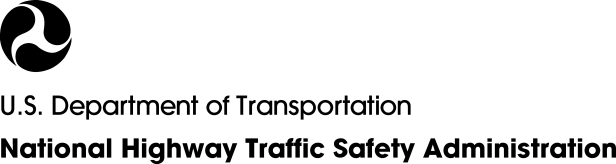
1. **Don’t Drive Impaired.** If you are under age 21, it’s illegal for you to drink alcohol, and it’s illegal for you to drive after drinking alcohol. Did you know that in 2017, 15% of teen drivers involved in fatal crashes had alcohol in their system? But alcohol isn’t the only substance that can keep you from driving safely: Marijuana, like other drugs, affects a driver’s ability to react to their surroundings. Driving is a complex task, and marijuana slows reaction times, affecting the driver’s ability to drive safely. Remember that alcohol and drugs — illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter — impair driving and have deadly consequences.
2. **Buckle Up — Every Trip, Every Time. Everyone — Front Seat and Back.** Your seat belt is designed to keep you safe in a crash, but only if you’re wearing it. You should always buckle your seat belt, whether you’re sitting in the front seat or back — no matter how long or short the trip. In 2017, there were 539 passengers killed in passenger vehicles driven by teen drivers, and more than half (60%) of those passengers who died were NOT buckled up at the time of the fatal crash. Even more troubling, when the teen driver was unbuckled, 87% of the passengers killed were also unbuckled. Before you start driving, buckle your seat belt and check to make sure your passengers are wearing theirs, too. It’s a simple task that could save your life.
3. **Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel. All the Time.** It’s tempting to answer a text or check your social media accounts while driving, but those few seconds that you take your eyes off the road could be your last. In 2017, among teen drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes, 9% were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. If you think that your cell phone is your only distraction, you’re wrong: Other passengers, audio and climate controls, and eating or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distracted driving. Loud music is distracting, too. Be sure to always take your headphones off before driving. You need to be able to hear another vehicle’s horn, or the siren from an emergency vehicle.
4. **Follow the Posted Speed Limit.** Speed limits aren’t just suggestions; they are there to keep you safe. In 2017, more than one-quarter (27%) of teen drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash. Remember to always drive within the speed limit; it could be what saves you from a deadly crash.

* **Passengers.** Driving your friends to school may seem like a good idea, but it’s not. Per data analyzed by NHTSA, teen drivers were 2.5 times more likely to engage in one or more potentially risky behaviors when driving with one teenage passenger, when compared to driving alone. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behaviors triples when driving with multiple passengers. If you have a provisional driver’s license, be sure you are aware of the restrictions in your state’s graduated driver licensing laws regarding transporting passengers, driving at night, and other key safety areas.

We know you’re probably hearing a lot of messages from your parents about things they want you to do, but the message about safe driving could save you and your friends’ lives. There’s a reason your parents are so strict when it comes to you getting behind the wheel: Surveys show that teens whose parents set firm rules for driving typically engage in less risky driving behaviors, and are involved in fewer crashes.

Now that you know the most important behaviors to follow to keep yourself safe, be sure to follow them every time you drive.

NHTSA’s website, [www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving), has detailed information and statistics on teen driving, and the basic rules for you to follow to stay safe on the road.



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