**Sample Op-Ed – Teens Target Audience**

**Prepare for the Road Ahead**

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States — ahead of all other types of injury, disease, or violence.

In 2015, there were 1,972 teen drivers (15 to 18 years old) in cars, trucks, and SUVs involved in fatal traffic crashes, resulting in 2,207 deaths nationwide, of which 1,730 were teens. An estimated 99,000 teen drivers were injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes.

You will get information on road safety from school, driver education classes, and State driver licensing agencies, but family conversations about safe driving behaviors can make a huge—and potentially lifesaving—difference. To reinforce the message you’re getting at home, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration offers six key rules for you to follow to keep you, family, friends, and other road users safe.

All teens are invited to participate in National Teen Driver Safety Week October 15-21, 2017, and remember: it’s ultimately up to you to make the right decisions behind the wheel.

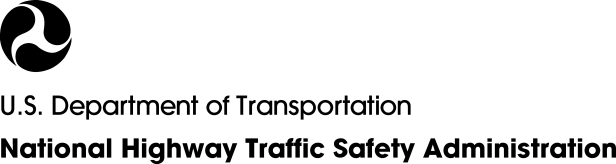
During the week, State and local highway safety and law enforcement organizations are teaming up with NHTSA to promote safe teen driving habits.

1. **No Drinking and Driving.** If you are under 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 2015, one out of every five teen drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking? Remember that alcohol and drugs, illegal or prescription, impair driving and have deadly consequences.
2. **Buckle Up—Every Trip, Every Time. Everyone—Front Seat and Back.** Seat belts are designed to keep you safe in a crash, whether you’re sitting in the front seat or back. But in 2015, there were 531 passengers killed in passenger vehicles driven by teen drivers, and more than half of those passengers who died were NOT buckled up at the time of the fatal crash. Even more troubling, in 84 percent of cases when the teen driver was unbuckled, the passengers were also unbuckled. Before you start driving, buckle your seat belt. 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 the last thing you ever see. In 2015, among teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes, 10 percent 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, or eating or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distracted driving.
4. **Follow the Posted Speed Limit.** Speed limits aren’t just suggestions; they are there to keep you safe. In 2015, almost one-third (29%) of teen passenger vehicle drivers 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.
5. **Passengers**. Driving your friends to school may seem like a good idea, but it’s not. According to data, teen drivers are 2.5 times more likely to engage in one or more potentially risky behaviors when driving with one teenage peer, when compared to driving alone. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behaviors triples when driving with multiple passengers.
6. **Avoid Driving Tired.** Everyone is busy studying, participating in extracurricular activities, and keeping up with friends. For many teens, the easiest thing to skimp on is the thing they need the most: sleep. This is a dangerous habit that can lead to drowsy driving. Make sure you get a good night’s sleep; your grades, your friends, your passengers, and other drivers will thank you because you’ll be a safer driver.

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

For more information about National Teen Driver Safety Week and safe driving tips for your teens, please visit [www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving).

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