## Fact Sheet/Talking Points – Adult Target Audience

**Talk to Your Teen About Safe Driving Habits**

**National Teen Driver Safety Week is October 15-21, 2017**

This week and every week, parents should have conversations with their teens about the important rules they need to follow to stay safe behind the wheel of a passenger car, truck, or SUV. These rules address the greatest dangers for teen drivers: alcohol, inconsistent or no seat belt use, distracted and drowsy driving, speeding, and number of passengers.

**THE PROBLEM — TOO MANY TEENS ARE DYING ON OUR ROADS**

* Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens (15 to 18 years old) in the United States – ahead of all other types of injury, disease, or violence.
* In 2015, there were 1,972 teen drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes. An estimated 99,000 teen passenger vehicle drivers were injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes.
* Parents can be the biggest influencers on teens’ choices behind the wheel – if they take the time to talk with their teens about some of the biggest driving risks, including:  
  + **Alcohol:** All teens are too young to legally buy, possess, or consume alcohol, however nationally in 2015, almost one out of five teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in a fatal crash had been drinking. Remind your teen that driving under the influence of any impairing substance, including illicit or prescription drugs, could have deadly consequences.
  + **Seat Belts:** Wearing a seat belt is one of the simplest ways for teens to stay safe in a vehicle. Yet too many teens aren’t buckling up, and neither are their passengers. In 2015, a total of 531 passengers died in passenger vehicles driven by teen drivers. And 58 percent of those passengers were NOT wearing their seat belts 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.
  + **Distracted Driving:** Distractions while driving are more than just risky—they can be deadly. In 2015, among teen drivers involved in fatal crashes, 10 percent were reported as distracted at the time of the crash.
  + **Speeding:** In 2015, almost one-third (29%) of all teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash.
  + **Passengers:** Teen drivers transporting passengers can lead to disastrous consequences. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of passengers in a car. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behavior triples when traveling with multiple passengers.
  + **Drowsy Driving:** Teens are busier than ever: studying, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, and spending time with friends are among the long list of things they do to fill their time. However, with all of these activities, teens tend to compromise something very important—sleep. This is a dangerous habit that can lead to drowsy driving.

**THE SOLUTION — TALK REGULARLY TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT THE DANGERS OF DRIVING**

Parents – you’ve guided your teen this far. Driving is a new chapter, a step toward independence for many teens. But your job is not done. Surveys show that teens with parents who set firm rules for driving typically engage in less risky driving behaviors and are involved in fewer crashes. But your kids can’t listen if you don’t talk.

* From October 15-21, join parents across the country and participate in *National Teen Driver Safety Week*.
* Get the facts about teen driving and share these statistics with your teen.
* Know your State’s nighttime driving restrictions, passenger restrictions, and all the graduated driver licensing (GDL) restrictions, and help enforce them.
* Be a good role model for your teen driver and set an example with your own safe driving habits.
* Remind your teen that driving is a privilege, not a right, and it must always be taken seriously.
* Set the rules before they hit the road.

**REMEMBER THE RULES OF THE ROAD**

1. **No Drinking and Driving.**

Set a good example by not driving after drinking. Remind your teen that drinking before the age of 21 is illegal, and alcohol and driving should never mix, no matter your age. Also remind them that driving under the influence of any impairing substance, including illicit or prescription drugs, could have deadly consequences.

1. **Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time. Everyone—Front Seat and Back.**

Lead by example. If you wear your seat belt every time you’re in the car, your teen is more likely to follow suit. Remind your teen that it’s important to buckle up on every trip, every time, no matter what (both in the front and back seats).

1. **Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel. All the Time.**

Remind your teen about the dangers of texting, dialing, or using mobile apps while driving. Have them make their phone off-limits when they are on the road and turn on the “Do Not Disturb” or similar feature on their phone. Distracted driving isn’t limited to phone use; other passengers, audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving are all sources of dangerous distractions for teen drivers.

1. **Obey All Posted Speed Limits.**

Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, especially for teens who lack the experience to react to changing circumstances around their cars. Obey the speed limit, and require your teen to do the same. Explain that every time the speed you’re driving doubles, the distance your car will travel when you try to stop quadruples.

1. **Passengers.**

With each passenger in the vehicle, your teen’s risk of a fatal crash goes up. Review your State’s GDL law before your teen takes to the road; it may prohibit any passengers in vehicles with teen drivers.

1. **Avoid Driving Tired.**

It’s easy for your teen to lose track of time while doing homework or participating in extracurricular activities, so make sure they get what they need most—a good night’s sleep.

**PARENTS — KEEP TALKING YEAR-ROUND**

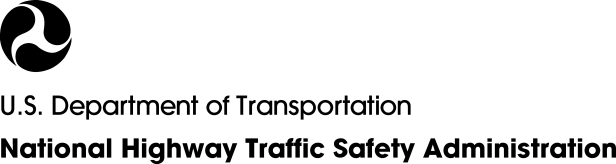
Start the conversation with your teen about safe driving habits during *National Teen Driver Safety Week*, but continue the conversation every day throughout the year.

Even if it seems like they’re tuning you out, keep reinforcing these rules. They’re listening—your constant reminders about these powerful messages will get through.

Get creative! Talking is just one way to discuss safe driving. You can also write your teen a letter, send e-mail or text reminders, leave sticky note reminders in the car, or use social media to get your message across.

Get it in writing. Create a parent-teen driving contract that outlines the rules and consequences for your teen driver. Hang the signed contract in a visible place as a constant reminder about the rules of the road.

If you and your teen are going somewhere together, let your teen drive. Make sure he or she is following the guidelines you’ve set.

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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