

# Traffic Safety News

Volume 5 Issue 4

80 State Highway 310, Suite 1, Canton NY 13617-1493  
Phone: 315-379-2306: E-mail: mdavison@co.st-lawrence.ny.us

Late Spring 2008

Funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration with a grant from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee

## Risky Ride for Passengers of Teen Drivers

For the past several years, national statistics have shown that for teens and preteens from 8-17, motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death. A recently-released study from The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) points to the risks of teen driving—not only for drivers, but for their passengers as well.

The CHOP study looked at national data on serious car crashes, including those that resulted in at least one fatality. They found that while teen drivers are at highest risk of dying, child passengers also were being killed in these crashes. Fifty-four percent of children who died had been riding with a teen driver. Almost two-thirds of young passengers who died in vehicle crashes were not wearing seat belts.

The fatal crashes most often occurred on roads with speed limits above 45 mph and when kids were not wearing seat belts. Other risk factors included a male driver, alcohol use and weekend driving.

New York State's Graduated Licensing Law sets limits for newly-licensed teen drivers. Many risky driving situations, such as night driving and carrying teen passengers, are restricted during the period of junior licensing. However, there are some exceptions for young family members who ride with the teen driver.

Parents should make sure that their teen can handle the responsibility of driving younger siblings. If their kids are getting a ride with neighbors or friends, parents need to be sure that the driver is not a junior licensee, and ideally has had at least a year of driving experience.



Adults should insist that when their children ride in a vehicle, everyone is buckled up or secured by an appropriate child restraint. After kids outgrow booster seats, at about 8 years old and approximately 4'9" tall, they may ask to ride in the front seat. Be sure that the teen driver is aware that the safest place for children and "tweens" is in back, away from the passenger side air bags.

The CHOP researches also advise parents to

develop refusal skills with their children. Teens often want to turn down a ride from someone who is impaired or takes risks, but they may not be sure what to say. Parents can help teens to practice declining a ride. CHOP also recommends that youth and parents develop a "code word" that teens can use to signal a problem when calling for a ride home.

Sources:  
[www.mediaseed.tv/Story.aspx?story=34691](http://www.mediaseed.tv/Story.aspx?story=34691)

[www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23452668/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23452668/)

## More Tips for Passenger Safety



Children under 13 should always ride in the back.

New York State Law requires that the seat belt be worn *properly*, with the lap belt low over the hips, (not over the abdomen) and the shoulder belt crossing the mid shoulder and mid-chest. If you put the seat belt under your arm, you are increasing the forces over the chest and abdomen. If you put the shoulder belt behind your back, you are removing your upper body protection.

**Anything** unsecured in the vehicle is a potential missile in a crash—including books and backpacks, unbelted passengers, and unbuckled booster seats. Teach your booster-aged children to buckle the belt around their booster seat when they exit the vehicle.

## Car Seat Confusion

Parents are understandably confused about car seats — which seats to use, what the laws are, and other important questions about their child's safety. Part of the confusion is the discrepancy between laws, the car seat's instructions, and the recommendations of various experts.

To help solve this problem, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has endorsed a standardized training for those who provide car seat information in their communities. This training ensures that the experts will provide up-to-date and consistent information for consumers about the "best practices" for restraining children in vehicles. Their information comes from decades of research on motor vehicle collisions and from crash tests. Individuals who successfully complete the training are certified as Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technicians.

Certified CPS technicians are uniquely qualified to provide information about the types of car

seats to use for the age and stage of the child, and they can teach parents how to use and install the seats in their vehicles. In addition, some of the local technicians also provide programs to help low-income families to obtain car seats.

Members of law enforcement, health and safety professionals, fire/rescue personnel and others are involved in this program. We work together as the North Country Child Safety



Coalition, and also serve our neighbors through our local agencies. We are able to offer a handful of "fitting stations" where parents can make an appointment for individual help installing their safety seats.

Those who have car seat questions should look for a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. You can find one listed by county at <http://www.safeny.org/seatlist.htm>, or by calling the St. Lawrence County Traffic Safety Program at 379-2306.

Currently-funded fitting stations can be found below.

### FITTING STATIONS IN ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY

*Find out if your child's car seat is properly installed.*

#### GOUVERNEUR VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD

Every 3rd Saturday of the Month  
9AM-1PM,  
**315-287-1321**

#### OGDENSBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

By appointment only  
when a staff technician is available  
No low-income program at this site  
**315-393-2321**

#### POTSDAM RESCUE SQUAD BUILDING

Every other Tuesday from 2-4 PM  
by appointment only  
**315-379-2306**

#### MASSENA SEAWAY VALLEY AMBULANCE

Wednesday mornings 7 AM -12PM  
**315-764-9133**

**Please call to ensure service, as all sites have limited staffing or hours. No cost for service, but donations are gratefully accepted.**

## Don't forget:



### For Prom, Graduation and Beyond



Information about safe celebrations, laws regarding underage drinking, teen driving facts, communicating with your teen, and more can be found at the

**St. Lawrence County Parents Who Host Lose the Most® Web Site**

**<http://www.slcsafeschools.org/slctrfficsafety/>**