

Traffic Safety News

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Parents Matter for Teen Drivers

Motor vehicle collisions are the number one killer of teens and young adults. Locally, drivers under 21 make up only 7% of licensed drivers, but were involved in 20% of fatal and personal injury crashes, based on 2007 statistics.

Young drivers in St. Lawrence County also take risks behind the wheel. Even though they cannot legally drink alcohol in New York State, 16% of the drivers involved in alcohol-related fatal and personal injury crashes were under the age of 21. Drivers under 21 were also involved in over a quarter of the County's speed-related motor vehicle crashes during that same year. Nationally, about 2/3 of teens killed in road collisions are in vehicles driven by another teen.

One bright spot for parents of teen drivers is that they have an impact on their

teen's driving habits. This is bolstered by recent research from Ginsburg and others at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) that shows the extent of parents' influence on raising safer drivers. In one study, teen respondents who reported that their parents set driving rules and monitored their activities in a "helpful and supportive way" were half as likely to be involved in a crash, and almost 2/3 less likely to drive while intoxicated.

The CHOP researchers also found that teens who had their own car, rather than having to share the vehicle with other family members, were more than twice as likely to be involved in a collision. The authors believe that when teens have



to ask for the keys, the parents have more opportunities to check in with their teen about driving.

According to the research, there are specific things parents can do to keep teens safer while driving, such as: setting clear rules about driving; talking with kids about where they are going and who they are with; and making sure teens know the rules are in place because parents care about them and their safety - not because they wish to control them.

In St. Lawrence County, the Traffic Safety Program cooperates with the Department of Motor Vehicles to provide information to both parents and new drivers when the teen receives a driver's permit. One of the documents they receive is a parent-teen



driver agreement, which serves as an outline for discussion about driving rights and responsibilities. Other new driver information in the packet includes safe driving tips and information about licensure. Both parents and teens can also find information about laws and licensing in NY at www.nysdmv.com/youngerdriver.

The Traffic Safety Program also reminds parents that they should set a good example behind the wheel. They should always make sure everyone in the vehicle is buckled up, stay focused on driving, and maintain a safe speed.

Changes in the Graduated Licensing Law

On February 22, 2010, the following changes to New York's Licensing Laws will affect young drivers:

- ◆ **Reduce from two to one the number of non-family passengers** under age 21 riding in a motor vehicle operated by a junior permit/junior license holder when not accompanied by a licensed parent or guardian.
- ◆ **Elimination of the limited use junior license** and require that a junior permit be held for at least six months before a junior or senior license may be issued.
- ◆ **Increase the number of supervised driving hours** before scheduling a road test **from 20 to 50 hours**, including at least **15 hours** of driving after sunset.

Non-Traffic Injuries with Car Seats as Carriers

According to *USA Today* (10.20.09) many young children are injured when car seats are used outside of the vehicle. They report that more than 43,000 infants in the United States required emergency room care between 2003 and 2007 after falling in car seats that were improperly placed on tables, counters and other elevated surfaces. Injuries were even reported after seats rolled over on soft surfaces, such as beds and sofas, according to Dr. Shital Parikh, researcher and a pediatric orthopedist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

Children may also become strangled by harnesses when they are allowed to sleep in car seats used as infant carriers/cribs outside of a vehicle. Some infant seats have been subject to handle recalls that put the child at risk of falls when the seat is being used

as a carrier.

Parents are advised to only use their child's car seat as directed in the manufacturer's instructions. Children should be fastened correctly in the seat, without any add-on padding under the harness. Infant seats should be installed in a semi-reclined position, and there shouldn't be more than 1 inch of movement from side to side or front to back at the belt path. New car seats should be registered using the card included with the car seat, by enrolling on-line, or by calling the manufacturer (the number is on a sticker on the outside of the safety seat). Recalls can be registered on the national auto safety hotline at 1-888-327-4236.

Parents/caregivers can find information and assistance with car seats by contacting a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST). These experts have taken an intensive

course that provides the most current and reliable information about child safety seat regulations, laws, and safest practices for use and installation.

There are several sites around the county where parents can make an appointment for a personalized instruction session with a CPST. There are also scheduled "car seat checks" that don't require an appointment. These can be found at the www.safeny.com web site, or by calling the SLC Traffic Safety Program at 315-379-2306.



FITTING STATIONS IN ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY

GOUVERNEUR

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

OGDENSBURG

FIRE DEPARTMENT
By appointment only when
a staff technician is available
315-393-2321



POTSDAM

RESCUE SQUAD BUILDING
Every other Tuesday from 2-4 PM
by appointment only
315-379-2306

MASSENA

SEAWAY VALLEY AMBULANCE
Most Wednesday mornings only
-please call ahead
315-764-9133

Nine out of ten car seats are not installed properly.
Find out if your child's car seat is used and installed correctly!
Car seats checked by appointment. Please call ahead to ensure service,
as all sites have limited staff and hours.