

# Young Drivers

Motor vehicle crashes are the *leading cause of death* for 15- to 20- year-olds. Per mile driven, teens are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers. Teens must realize that driving is not a right, but a privilege that can be taken away. It comes with a responsibility to keep themselves and others safe.

## Top five causes of young driver crashes:

### 1. Lack of Driving Experience and Inadequate Driving Skills

- ▶ Misjudgment
- ▶ Driving too fast for road conditions
- ▶ Not under proper control
- ▶ Overcorrecting/Oversteering



The Graduated Driver's License (GDL) law, enacted in October 2006, aims to reduce teenage driving fatalities, crashes and injuries by prolonging the learning process for novice drivers. The law seeks to control high-risk situations new drivers commonly face and motivate them to drive safely.

For teens, the likelihood of being in a crash is at a lifetime high in the first 12 months and 1,000 miles of driving.

A majority of young driver crashes, injuries and fatalities are due to driver inexperience and lack of driving skills.

For more information on the GDL law, visit [drive.ky.gov](http://drive.ky.gov).

### 2. Driver Distraction and Inattention

- ▶ Talking to passengers
- ▶ Using a cell phone/texting
- ▶ Changing the CD/radio/iPod
- ▶ Eating, drinking and smoking
- ▶ Daydreaming



House Bill 415, signed into law in April 2010, bans texting for drivers of all ages while the vehicle is in motion. For drivers under age 18, dialing or talking on a cell phone while the vehicle is in motion is **NOT** permitted. The use of a global positioning system is allowed, but manually entering information must be completed while the vehicle is stopped.

Violators will be fined \$25 for the first offense and \$50 for each subsequent offense plus court costs.

Under the GDL law, a driver must hold the permit or intermediate license for 180 consecutive days conviction-free before progressing to the next licensing phase. If a citation is received, the 180-day period will begin anew. Not only are you risking injury or death if you use a cell phone while driving, you are taking a chance on postponing a full unrestricted license.

### 3. Low Seat Belt Use



Kentucky's primary seat belt law means all drivers and passengers must be restrained while in the vehicle. A fine of \$25 will be given to the driver for **EACH PERSON** who is not restrained.

Seat belt use is one of the most effective measures to decrease injuries and deaths; unfortunately, teens are less likely to be buckled up than any other age group. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and injury by 65 percent.

### 4. Impaired Driving

- ▶ Drugs
- ▶ Alcohol
- ▶ Prescription and non-prescription medication
- ▶ Fatigue

Once a person takes a drink, impairment begins. Alcohol slows reflexes, weakens coordination, blurs eyesight, gives a false sense of being in control, and leads to risky decision-making.



All states have a **ZERO TOLERANCE** law, meaning it is illegal for people under the age of 21 to drive after drinking any amount of alcohol. Being convicted of driving under the influence (DUI) may lead to jail time, losing your license, an increase in insurance rates, or payment of fines and court costs. Most importantly, it could cause serious injury or death.

### 5. Speeding and Aggressive Driving

- ▶ Risk-taking behavior
- ▶ Ignoring the posted speed limit
- ▶ Following too close
- ▶ Weaving in and out of traffic

According to NHTSA, teens are more likely than older drivers to participate in risk-taking behaviors, especially young males. Speed-related crashes are frequently combined with impairment and no seat belt usage.



#### For additional information:

- **AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety:** [www.aaafoundation.org](http://www.aaafoundation.org)
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:** [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)
- **National Injury Prevention Foundation "ThinkFirst":** [www.thinkfirst.org](http://www.thinkfirst.org)
- **National Organizations for Youth Safety:** <https://noys.org/>
- **National Safety Council:** <https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/safety-topics/teen-driving>
- **Students Against Destructive Decisions:** [www.sadd.org](http://www.sadd.org)