



Driving on the Right Side of the Road Young Drivers



JUST THE FACTS:

NATIONALLY:

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for all 15-to-20 year olds.¹
- In 2010, 1,963 young (15-to 20-year-old) drivers were killed and an additional 187,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes. In an encouraging trend, driver fatalities in the 15- to 20-year-old age group declined by 46% between 2001 and 2010.²
- Teenagers are overrepresented in traffic crashes both as drivers and as passengers. In 2010, 10% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes and 14% of all drivers involved in police-reported crashes were young drivers.³
- In 2010, 4,585 young drivers were involved in fatal crashes.⁴
- On the basis of miles driven, teenagers are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers. For every teen that is killed in motor vehicle crashes, about 100 are injured. Severe injuries such as burns or loss of limbs or paralysis can drastically change your life. Everything can change - from the way you think to the way you eat to the way you look as a result of an injury suffered in a motor vehicle crash. Such changes can be forever.
- During 2010, 216 young motorcycle riders (15 to 20 years old) were killed, and 5,000 were injured.⁵ Thirty percent (30%) of the young motorcycle riders who were fatally injured in crashes in 2010 were not wearing helmets.⁶
- The high crash rate of this age group (15 to 20 years old) is caused primarily by lack of maturity and driving experience coupled with overconfidence and risk-taking behaviors. High risk behaviors include failure to wear safety belts, speeding, driving while impaired by alcohol or other drugs, and drowsy or distracted driving. This age group is particularly susceptible to distractions caused by other passengers in the vehicle, electronic devices, and music.
- In 2010, 30% of the young drivers who were killed in crashes had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .01 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher, and 25% had a BAC of .08 g/dL or higher.⁷ Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 71% were unrestrained.⁸
- Speeding nearly triples the risk of being involved in a crash or near-crash. Driving too fast for existing driving conditions reduces your ability to steer safely, extends your stopping distances, and can prevent you from reacting quickly enough to avoid a crash. A relatively small speed increase can have large and possibly lethal consequences because a vehicle's crash impact increases exponentially with its speed. Driving 55 mph versus 50 mph, for example, increases a car's crash impact by 21 percent, but driving 60 mph versus 50 mph limit increases a vehicle's impact by 44 percent. A recent report concluded that a 10 percent reduction in average traffic speed would likely reduce traffic crashes by 34 percent.

IN TEXAS:

- In 2010, there were 496 fatalities in crashes involving young drivers (ages 15-20). Of the 496, 187 were the young drivers themselves, 125 were passengers in the young drivers' vehicles, 141 were occupants of other vehicles and 43 were non-occupants.⁹

IT'S THE LAW:

- Young drivers must follow all of the same laws as other drivers in Texas.
- Additionally, there are some other requirements for drivers under 18 years of age.¹⁰
 - For 12 months after obtaining a license, a person under 18 years of age may not operate a motor vehicle after midnight and before 5 a.m. unless the operation of the vehicle is

necessary for the operator to attend or participate in employment or a school-related activity or because of a medical emergency. For the same period they may not drive with more than one passenger in the vehicle under 21 years of age who is not a family member or while using a wireless communications device (including a cell phone with hands-free capabilities), except in case of emergency.

- Similar restrictions apply to those under 17 years of age who holds a restricted motorcycle license or moped license.

KEEP IT SAFE:

- Be extremely careful when driving at night.
- Avoid distractions, like cell phones, text messaging, and too many passengers.
- Do not speed and don't encourage the driver to speed.
- Do not accept a challenge at a red light to drag race.
- Do not drive while putting on sunscreen or makeup.
- Tell your friends that it is not cool to drive crazy. Wear your seat belt and require all passengers to wear theirs.
- Do not drive when drowsy or short on sleep.
- Do not drink and drive.

What Other Safety Tips Can You Suggest?

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

CARFAX Safe Car – Safe Teen Driver Program

NHTSA *Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors: Focus Group Final Report*, September 2006.

www.t-driver.com

www.traffic-school-for-kids.com

http://fcs.tamu.edu/safety/passenger_safety/youth_traffic_safety.php

www.texas.aaa.com

www.theartofdriving.org

www.Edmunds.com Teen Driver Safety Series

NHTSA – New Driver Safety Information

www.TeenDriving.com

Kid's Aren't Cargo: Fact Sheet, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Traffic Safety Facts, 2010 Data, *Young Drivers*, DOT HS 811 622, <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811622.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Texas Transportation Code §545.424.