



Parents Make A Difference!

Teens & Distracted Driving



Did you know that of teens in southwest Wisconsin ...

6% OF 11TH & 12TH GRADERS HAVE DRIVEN A CAR AFTER DRINKING

8% of 11th & 12th graders have driven a car after using marijuana

19% of 9th-12th graders have ridden in a car with a driver who had been drinking

52% OF 11TH & 12TH GRADERS HAVE TEXTED WHILE DRIVING

61% of 11th & 12th graders have used a cell phone while driving

Data from CESA #3 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2015

Did you know that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States?

Most parents talk to their teens about the dangers of drunk driving and how important it is to wear seat belts. There is another important safety issue parents must talk to their teens about so they can stay safe behind the wheel: distracted driving. Distracted driving is any non-driving activity that has the potential to distract the driver from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing. In 2014, 3,179 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. The youngest and most inexperienced drivers are often the most at risk.

The most common driving distractions include talking with passengers and eating. Studies have shown that teen drivers are easily distracted by their passengers, especially friends. Just one non-family member in the car of a teen driver increases the rate of accidents by 44%. That risk doubles with a second passenger and quadruples when teens have three or more friends in the car.

Electronic distractions, like navigation systems and cell phones, are of increasing concern. A 2014 article in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the risk of a crash or near-crash among teen drivers increased with the performance of many secondary tasks, including texting and dialing cell phones.

Texting is the most dangerous distraction because it involves manual, visual and cognitive behaviors all at the same time. Texting involves

- taking your eyes off the road,
- your hands off the wheel, and
- your mind off the task of driving.

According to the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, that's the same as driving the entire length of a football field blindfolded. Teen drivers are the most likely age group to talk or text on their phones while driving. Teens who text while driving are 20 times more likely to have an accident than other teen drivers.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

As a parent, you are the number one influence on your teen driver's safety! Self-reported surveys show that teens whose parents impose driving restrictions and set good examples typically engage in less risky driving and are involved in fewer crashes.

According to www.safercar.gov, here are some keys to help your teen be a safer and more capable driver:



Start the conversation early – Talk to your teens early and often – even before they start driving. Be familiar with the Graduated Driver's Licensing (GDL) laws and review them with your teen. Set the rules for driving and explain the consequences for breaking them. Remind your teen that driving is a privilege and one they will lose if they don't drive by your rules. Remember, your own rules can be tougher than the GDL laws because you know your teen best. Besides ongoing conversations with your teen, also talk with the parents of your teen's friends to share and compare rules and expectations.



Set a good example – Although conversations are important, action is even better! Model safe driving behaviors for your children. Think about your driving habits anytime you are driving them somewhere and explain why you are doing what you do. Consider all the distractions that tempt you and talk about how to avoid them or what options there might be. A good place to start is to build a new habit of turning your own cell phone off and putting it away before starting the car.



Spell out the rules – Think about a Parent/Teen Driving Contract that you can post where the car keys are kept or near the door. Whether it's written or verbal, discuss your rules and stick to them! An example of a Parent/Teen Driving Contract can be found at <http://www.distraction.gov/take-action/parents.html>. The contract can be a guide for you and your teen as you talk about various driving distractions like:

- No cell phones – as of December 2014, more than 1.5 billion texts were sent each month in the United States and that number continues to grow. Teens text more than any other age group and they need to avoid texting while driving.
- No extra passengers – research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of teenagers in the car.
- No speeding – speeding was a factor in about 1/3 of fatal crashes for teen drivers in 2013.
- No alcohol – even though teens can't legally purchase or possess alcohol, they are at a much greater risk of death in crashes involving alcohol.
- Always buckle up – seat belts are the very best way to protect drivers and passengers in a crash. Seat belts are designed to keep drivers in a secure position so they can maintain control in an emergency.

REMEMBER – PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Distracted Driving Resources:

www.distraction.gov/

www.safercar.gov/parents/TeenDriving/

<http://myparenthetical.com/handing-over-the-keys-helping-teens-become-safe-drivers/>

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