

A parent's guide to keeping their teen safe behind the wheel

Written by Allstate
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Back to school is about more than school supplies, new clothes and a return to familiar routines. It is also about good times, social gatherings and renewing acquaintances. But for parents of teens who drive, or ride with new teen drivers, it is also a time of concern.

More than 3,000 teens are killed and approximately 300,000 injured in automobile crashes each year. In fact, teenage drivers have the highest crash risk of any age group, and the problem is worst among 16 year-olds, who have the most limited driving experience behind the wheel.

To help keep your teen driver safe regardless of the season, Allstate agent Tom Baecker suggests that you consider the following guidelines for safe driving:

Put a limit on the number of passengers in the car. Teens are likely to have more trouble focusing on the road with laughter, music, food and other distractions, all of which increase with the number of passengers.

Establish and enforce a house curfew. Check with your local police department to see if your town has a curfew for minors. If not, set your own.

Insist that your teen and his or her passengers always use seat belts. Teens tend to wear seat belts less often than other drivers. Remind your teen that the presence of airbags does not mean he or she can ignore seat belts.

Make sure your teen keeps the cell phone turned off. Teens may love talking on the phone, but doing so while driving is a dangerous distraction. Talking on a cell phone can give a teen the reaction time of a 70-year old.

Limit or supervise your teen's driving during times of high risk. In 2005, the highest number of fatal teen driving accidents occurred on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Also in 2005, one-half of teen crash deaths happened between 9 p.m. and 9 a.m.

Set driving area limits. If your teen wants to travel outside your town or city, require that he or she request special permission.

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Prohibit driving or riding with others under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Your teen should know that you will always be willing to pick up him or her rather than have them risk driving after they have been drinking or riding with a driver who has been drinking. Consider revoking driving privileges for a period of time if your teen places himself/herself in these dangerous situations.

For more information about teen safe driving and statistics, visit <http://www.allstatefoundation.org/teen-driving> or a local Allstate agent office to order a variety of teen safe driving resources, including the Parent-Teen Driving Agreement.