

Injury is *NO* accident: Live Injury-Free

National Public Health Week

April 4-10, 2011

Improve Teen Driving Safety

Teen driving facts

- The number of teens and young adults, ages 15-19, killed in motor vehicle crashes in Colorado dropped 75 percent between 2004 and 2009. However, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death in Colorado for this age group.
- Sixteen-year-old drivers have the highest crash-involvement rate of any age group in Colorado and are nearly three times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than the average of all other drivers.
- Teens are less likely than adults to understand the risks of driving because they lack experience and tend to overestimate their own driving abilities. Their brains still are developing, affecting judgment while driving.
- Graduated driver's license laws work. In 2005, the Colorado General Assembly passed additional components to Colorado's law that restrict the number of passengers a minor driver can transport and prohibit any minor driver who has held a license for less than one year from driving between midnight and 5 a.m. Since this law went into effect, the teen motor vehicle death rate dropped from 31.1 deaths per 100,000 teens ages 15-19 in 2004 to 12.7 deaths per 100,000 teens in 2009.

What is the graduated drivers license?

Graduated driver's licensing is a proven system that helps beginning drivers gain important driving skills gradually, under lower-risk conditions and with minimum distractions. There are three stages to Colorado's graduated driver's license system:

1. Learner's permit – Gives a new driver the opportunity to gain experience with adult supervision
2. Intermediate license (after passing the road test) - Gives a new driver under age 18 the opportunity to drive alone, but with restrictions (limits the number of passengers and sets a night driving curfew)
3. License with full privileges

Additionally, no driver under age 18 can use a cell phone while driving to talk or text, and seat belts are required for teen drivers and all their passengers.

Action steps for teens

- Practice driving with an experienced driver, such as your parent or a driving instructor.
- Always wear your seat belt, whether you are a passenger or driver. Make sure everyone else in the vehicle buckles up too.
- Ask your parents to practice with you in cities and on country roads, as well as in the rain, at night and in heavy traffic.
- Turn off your cell phone. Texting or talking on your cell phone while driving is against the law for drivers under age 18 in Colorado.

Action steps for parents

- Learn Colorado's graduated driver's license laws.
- Enroll your teen in driver education.
- Supervise your teen's driving.
- Set family rules and limits by creating a parent/teen driving contract and impose consequences for violations.
- Be a good role model: Always wear your seat belt, and do not use a cell phone to talk or text while driving.

For more information about Colorado laws and teen driving safety, visit www.coteedriver.com
For a list of state-approved driving schools, visit the website for the Colorado Department of Revenue Division of Motor Vehicles at www.colorado.gov/revenue/dmv .

For more information on this fact sheet, contact Lindsey Myers, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 303-692-2589, or lindsey.myers@state.co.us .

