



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.

What contributes to young driver crashes?

In 2009 there were 28,207 total crashes involving drivers under 21 years of age. These crashes resulted in 9,348 injuries and 136 fatalities. *Please note there may be multiple contributing factors for one crash, which is reflected in the numbers below.

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 Oct. 1, 2006, aims to reduce teenage driving fatalities 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.

In 2009, there were 8,832 crashes caused by a young inexperienced driver, resulting in 3,683 injuries and 72 fatalities.

For more information on the GDL law, including a guide for parents, a permit practice exam and GDL eligibility requirements, visit <http://gdl.kytc.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 on April 15, 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.

In 2009, there were 14,505 crashes caused by a young distracted driver, resulting in 4,531 injuries and 40 fatalities. Five of these fatalities were due to cell phone use.



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 in a crash; unfortunately, teens are less likely to be buckled up than any other age group. In 2009, 398 (61.3%) of the 791 motor vehicle fatalities were unrestrained in Kentucky. Of the 398 unrestrained fatalities, 49 were young drivers and passengers.

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. In 2009 there were 783 crashes due to an impaired young driver, resulting in 513 injuries and 22 fatalities.

5. Speeding and Aggressive Driving

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



According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 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. In 2009 there were 2,399 crashes due to an aggressive or speeding young driver, resulting in 795 injuries and 32 fatalities.

Aggressive driving is against the law! KRS 189.290 states: The operator of any vehicle upon a highway shall operate the vehicle in a careful manner, with regard for the safety and convenience of pedestrians and other vehicles upon the highway.

For additional information:

- **AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety:** www.aaafoundation.org
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:** www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- **National Injury Prevention Foundation "ThinkFirst":** www.thinkfirst.org
- **National Safety Council:** www.nsc.org
- **STOP Underage Drinking:** www.stopalcoholabuse.gov
- **Students Against Destructive Decisions:** www.sadd.org
- **The USAA Educational Foundation:** www.usaaedfoundation.org

