

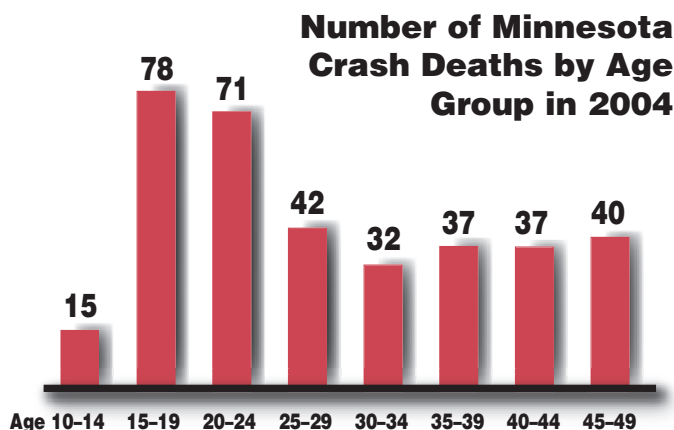


Teen Drivers

Risk Situations

Statistics show that the top six driving risk factors for teens are:

- **Failure to wear a seat belt** — Properly wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injury to front seat passenger occupants by 45 percent in a car and 60 percent in a light truck.
- **Inattentiveness** — Driver inattention/distraction is the most common contributing factor in multiple vehicle crashes.
- **Excessive speed** — Illegal/unsafe speed is the most common contributing factor in single vehicle crashes for drivers. Teens particularly have difficulty adjusting speed to driving conditions.
- **Fatigue** — A person who has been awake for 24 hours experiences impairment nearly equal to a blood alcohol concentration of 0.10 percent. Teens often don't get enough sleep.
- **Driving with other teens** — The presence of teen passengers strongly increases crash risk. For teen drivers, the more passengers the greater the risk.
- **Not checking traffic before pulling out** — Most crashes involving teens occur at intersections because of their inexperience judging distance and speed.



Source: Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety.



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Traffic Crashes: #1 Cause of Teen Deaths



Top five causes of death in Minnesota's 15–17-year-olds

1999–2003

| Cause | Number |
|------------------------|------------|
| Traffic Crashes | 236 |
| Suicide | 91 |
| Other Accidents | 59 |
| Cancer | 39 |
| Homicide | 26 |

Source: Minnesota Department of Health Center of Health Statistics

Parent Involvement Matters

Studies show that new drivers who are supervised have very few crashes. Developing necessary skills for safe driving is a complex task and can only be learned after many hours of practice. Driver education is a first step, but a parent's role in teaching students to drive is critical. Following are tips for parents.

- Require seat belt use at all times.
- When driving, set a good example for your teen.
- Take time and practice with your teen while they have their permit and during their first year of licensed driving. Give positive feedback frequently and remain calm while instructing teens.
- Minimize distractions by setting a limit on the number of passengers in the car, especially multiple teens.
- Prohibit driving while excessively fatigued.
- Discuss the dangers and legal consequences of driving impaired.
- Take time to discuss driving rules and consequences. Strike a written contract between you and your teen.
- Expose your teen to different driving conditions including wet roads, snow, highways, rural and metro roadways, night driving, etc. Practice on roads unfamiliar to the teen.
- Choose vehicles for safety, not image.
- Restrict new drivers to driving alone only under favorable conditions, such as during daylight hours, good weather and in low traffic. Gradually allow them to take on more driving situations.
- Review the Minnesota Driver's Manual.

Additional information is available through a new brochure, *Teens Behind the Wheel: A Roadmap for Parents*. This publication offers tools to assess teen drivers and provides a sample written contract. It is available at Minnesota Driver Exam Stations and at the following Web site.

www.dps.state.mn.us/ots