

NEBRASKA

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Pete Ricketts, Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2019 NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK

During National Teen Driver Safety Week, Talk to Your Teen about the Importance of Driving Safety

October 18, 2019 (Lincoln, Neb.) — National Teen Driver Safety Week is October 20–26, 2019, and the Nebraska Department of Transportation – Highway Safety Office wants to empower parents to discuss the importance of driver safety with young drivers.

“Teen Driver Safety Week is a perfect time to begin — and continue — the conversation on responsible driving with teens. We want to remind parents and adults not to hand over the car keys until the rules of the road are known,” stated Mark Segerstrom, NDOT – Highway Safety Administrator.

Since the implementation of Nebraska’s Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law in 2008, teen crashes resulting in injury or death have dropped by 57 percent. Although death rates have dropped, motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for teens. Nationally, 55 percent of teens who died from a motor vehicle crash were not wearing their seat belts, but in Nebraska in 2017, 73 percent of the teen traffic fatalities (drivers and passengers ages 13-19) were not wearing seatbelts.

While teen drivers make up seven percent of all licensed drivers across the state, they account for 21 percent of all reported crashes in 2018. Almost 95 percent of Nebraskan teens surveyed identified distractions like texting while driving a risk. However 67 percent of the same teens admitted to texting while driving “some or a lot” in the past month.

“Because of lack of experience, teen drivers pose a potential danger to themselves and to other drivers, which is why it is so important that adults take time to discuss driving safety with them,” said Segerstrom. “I hope National Teen Driver Safety Week encourages parents, school officials and everyone who comes in contact with teen drivers to start the conversation about



safe driving, to safeguard this vulnerable population we need to keep the conversation going — every day throughout the year.”

Seat belt usage, impaired and distracted driving, speed limits and passengers all pose a serious risk for younger inexperienced drivers. Parents can help protect their teen drivers by talking with them about these risks. A study released this year showed involved parents who set rules and monitor their teens’ driving behavior in a supportive way can lower their teens’ crash risk by half.

- **Seat Belt Safety:** Wearing a seat belt is one of the simplest ways for teens to stay safe in a vehicle. Yet too many teens aren’t buckling up. Nebraska’s law requires all occupants riding with a permit holder, including the driver, to wear a seat belt. In 2018, there were 175 occupants killed in passenger vehicles and more than half (66%) of those passengers who died were NOT buckled up at the time of the fatal crash. Lead by example and remind your teen that it’s important to buckle up on every trip, every time, no matter what — front seat and back.
- **Impaired Driving:** All teens are too young to legally buy, possess, or consume alcohol. However in 2018, Nebraska teen drivers were involved in 12 percent of the alcohol-involved crashes. Alcohol isn’t the only substance that can keep your teen from driving safely: In 2017, 6.5 percent of adolescents 12 to 17 years old were marijuana users. Like other drugs, marijuana affects a driver’s ability to react to their surroundings. Driving is a complex task, and marijuana slows reaction time, affecting a driver’s ability to drive safely. Remind your teen that driving under the influence of any impairing substance — including illicit or prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medication — could have deadly consequences.
- **Distracted Driving:** Cell phone use while driving is more than just risky — it can be deadly and is not allowed for permit holders operating a vehicle. In 2017 in Nebraska 58 percent of the teen driver cell phone distraction related traffic crashes resulted in an injury. Remind your teen about the dangers of texting and using a phone while driving. Distracted driving isn’t limited to cell phone use; other passengers, audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distractions for teen drivers. Also remind your teen that headphones are not appropriate to wear while driving a vehicle, as they can distract a driver from hearing sirens, horns, or other important sounds.
- **Speed Limits:** Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, especially for teens. In 2018, teen drivers were involved in more than one-third (36%) of the “exceeding the speed limit” crashes. Remind your teen to always drive within the speed limit.
- **Passengers:** Passengers in a teen’s car can lead to disastrous consequences. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up dramatically in direct relation to the number of passengers in a car. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behavior triples when traveling with multiple passengers. Remind your teen that Nebraska has restrictions on the number of passengers a teen permit driver can have in the vehicle.

For additional information and tips, please visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website at: www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving. This website has detailed information and statistics on teen driving, and outlines the basic rules parents can use to help reduce the risks for teen drivers.

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