

Fatal crashes fall among teen drivers

April 7 2011, By Robert E. Cilley

Programs that create some common-sense restrictions when young drivers get behind the wheel have helped cut the rate of deadly crashes by more than half. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) looked at fatal crashes among 16- and 17-year-old drivers. For every 100,000 youths, the rate of fatal crashes fell from 36 in 1996 to 16.7 in 2008. The CDC report cites graduated driver licensing (GDL) programs, which restrict driving under high-risk conditions when teens first get licenses.

While state GDL programs vary, most bar [teens](#) from [driving](#) late at night or with teen [passengers](#). The states with the toughest rules, New Jersey and New York, had the lowest fatal crash rates. Pennsylvania's GDL program involves a restricted license for 16- and 17-year-old drivers issued only after 50 hours of supervised driving. Driving between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. is prohibited, and the number of passengers may not exceed the number of seatbelts in the vehicle.

Still, there is a lot of room for progress: Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death among U.S. teens.

Do you have a newly licensed teen driver in the family? Pennsylvania's GDL program helps protect your teen; however, you can do more. Fatal crashes occur more often when there are teen passengers in the car. Other distractions, particularly cell phone use and texting, contribute to fatal crashes, as well.

The CDC suggests parents draft a parent-teen driving contract to

reinforce GDL rules, restrict passengers, and prohibit cell phone use.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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