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NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION, SADD PUT FOCUS ON PARENTS AND TEENS DURING NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK

Traffic crashes leading cause of teen deaths; More than 700 teen drivers died last year

NEW YORK, Sept. 22, 2020 -- Traffic crashes continue to be one of the leading causes of teen deaths, and teen drivers were responsible for more than 2,000 fatalities on the roads in 2018, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

In an effort to reduce those grim statistics, The National Road Safety Foundation is teaming with SADD, the nation's premier youth health and safety organization, to encourage parent-teen dialogue, especially during National Teen Driver Safety Week, which is Oct. 18-24.

The two non-profit organizations will mount an aggressive social media campaign and a virtual media tour to call attention to the risks teen drivers face and to introduce a newly-expanded resource for parents and teens – the Passport To Safe Driving.

"Teens are at risk when they drive because they haven't yet had much experience behind the wheel," said Michelle Anderson, director of operations for The National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF) and also a member of the Board of Directors of SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions). "During Teen Driver Safety Week, we hope to put a focus on teen driving and the role parents can and should play to ensure their young drivers travel safely."

In addition to lack of experience, teen drivers face a number of issues that can impact safety on the road, including impairment by alcohol and drugs, distraction, speeding and the use of seat belts by the driver and all passengers.

Although teens are too young to legally consume alcohol, 16 percent of teen drivers in fatal crashes had alcohol in their system. Marijuana, even though legal in some states, can impair the ability to drive safely and can hamper awareness and reflexes when an event on the road requires fast response. Prescription and some over-the-counter medications can also impair safe driving ability, so it is important to be aware when taking medication and make arrangements for someone else to drive.

Distraction is a factor in about ten percent of fatal teen crashes. Use of a cell phone - even a hands-free phone – is now prohibited by law in 38 states and D.C. But teens and parents should be aware other causes of distraction, including having other teens on the car, which triples the likelihood of risky driving behavior. Many state GDL laws place restrictions on having other teens in the car.

Most drivers tend to think of speeding as something “everyone” does, with the biggest risk being getting stopped for a ticket and having to pay a hefty fine. But speed is a factor in 28 percent of fatal teen crashes.

Many teens fail to take advantage of the most effective lifesaver in the event of crash – seat belts. Nearly half of all teen drivers killed in crashes were not wearing a seat belt, and when the driver is not buckled up, nine out of ten passengers who died in crashes were also not belted.

“These are sobering statistics,” said Rick Birt, President and CEO of SADD. “That is why we are working to get these messages out to the nearly half a million young people who are SADD members and, hopefully, through them we will reach their peers and parents, who play a crucial role in promoting safe and responsible teen driving.”

During National Teen Driver Safety Week, NRSF and SADD will launch the updated and expanded version of the Passport To Safe Driving. The free package, available online at the NRSF website or through local SADD Chapters, contains a number of driving tips for teens, accompanied by talking points for parents to use in an important dialogue with new drivers in their family. The Passport covers speeding, driving at night and in adverse weather, blind spots, negotiating left-hand turns and many other driving skills tips. The Passport also directs users, through QR codes, to additional free material, podcasts and videos. Several of the videos are student-produced by SADD Chapters.

More information and downloadable free materials are available free at www.teenlane.org or www.sadd.org

The National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF), a non-profit organization, has for nearly 60 years created driver education and safe driving programs for free distribution to teachers, police, traffic safety agencies, youth advocacy groups and others. NRSF has programs on distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving and other traffic safety issues. NRSF also sponsors national contests for teens in partnership with SADD and regional contests partnering with auto shows in Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington, D.C.

For almost 40 years, SADD, the nation’s premier youth health & safety organization, has worked to empower teens, engage parents, mobilize communities, and change lives around the issues of traffic safety, substance abuse, and personal health and safety. Through a national network of peer-led chapters in middle schools, high schools and colleges, SADD equips our students with the resources they need to advocate for change on their campuses and in their communities. Follow SADD on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SADD.org), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/SADD.org) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/SADD.org).