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National Teen Driver Safety Week Oct. 18-24

**Traffic Crashes Remain Leading Killer of U.S. Teens;
Parents Should Talk to Teens About Safe Driving
and Be Good Role Models Behind the Wheel**

NEW YORK, Oct. 14, 2026 — The National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF) reminds parents that National Teen Driver Safety Week, Oct. 18 - 24, is the perfect time for parents to have a conversation with their teens about safe driving habits.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of preventable death for teens in the United States. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports 2,162 teen drivers died in traffic crashes in 2024, and an estimated 184,129 teens were injured.

Inexperience is a major factor in teen crashes, with teens more likely than older drivers to underestimate or not be able to recognize dangerous situations. They are also more likely than adults to make critical errors that can lead to serious crashes.

“Parents need to be proactive and begin a conversation about safe driving,” said Michelle Anderson, director of operations at the National Road Safety Foundation. NRSF has free resources online to help lead those conversations.

Among key issues that deserve parental discussion are:

1. **Impaired Driving:** While teens are too young to legally consume alcohol, nationally 19% of teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2023 had alcohol in their system. Marijuana also affects a driver’s ability to react to their surroundings. Remind teens that driving under the influence of any impairing substance — including many prescription drugs or over-the-counter medication — can have deadly consequences.
2. **Seat Belts:** Wearing a seat belt is a simple way teens can stay safer in a vehicle, yet too many teens aren’t buckling up. Fifty-one percent of the teen drivers who die in crashes

are unbuckled. Parents should encourage their teens to always buckle up and confirm that all passengers are buckled before the vehicle moves.

3. **Distracted Driving:** Distraction is a major factor in teen crashes. One in three teens who text say they have done so while driving. Research has found that dialing a phone number while driving increases a teen's risk of crashing by six times, and texting while driving increases the risk by 23 times. Distracted driving isn't limited to cell phone use. Other passengers, adjusting audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving can be dangerous distractions for any driver, but especially for teens.
4. **Speed:** Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, but it's especially deadly for teens with less experience. Nearly one-third (32%) of all teen drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash. Data shows that males were more likely to be involved in fatal speeding-related crashes than females. Parents should remind their tens to always drive within the speed limit.
5. **Passengers:** Passengers in a teen's vehicle can lead to disastrous consequences. Research shows the risk of a fatal crash dramatically increases in direct relation to the number of passengers in a vehicle. The likelihood that a teen driver will engage in risky behavior triples when multiple passengers are in the same vehicle.

Parents should also encourage their teens and all family members to speak up if in a vehicle being driven unsafely. "Speaking up can save lives," Anderson said.

Surveys show that teens whose parents have discussions on safe driving behavior and set firm rules are typically engaged in less risky driving behaviors and are involved in fewer crashes.

"Parents often complain that their teens don't listen to them," said Anderson, "but studies show they watch what we do. It's up to us as parents to be good role models by demonstrating safe driving behavior all the time, long before teens even think about getting their learner's permit."

The National Road Safety Foundation offers tips for talks with teens in its Passport to Safe Driving, available free online at <https://www.nrsf.org/passport-safe-driving>.

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization that for more than 60 years has been dedicated to reducing crashes, deaths and injuries on our nation's highways by promoting safe driving habits through greater public awareness.

NRSF programs deal with distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency, passenger empowerment and pedestrian safety. The Foundation also works with key youth advocacy groups and sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe

driving to their peers and in their communities. For more information or to download free programs, visit www.nrsf.org.

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