



## News Release

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### AAA FINDS TEEN DRIVER FATALITY RISK QUADRUPLES WITH MULTIPLE YOUNG PASSENGERS

*New AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety study identifies risk management opportunities*

Virginia Beach, Va., (May 8, 2012) – The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety today released a [study](#) showing a strong association between the number and age of passengers present in-vehicle and the risk of a teen driver dying in a traffic crash.

The report, "[Teen Driver Risk in Relation to Age and Number of Passengers](#)," found that the likelihood of a 16- or 17-year-old driver being killed in a crash, per mile driven, increases with each additional young passenger in the vehicle. Compared to driving with no passengers, a 16- or 17-year-old driver's fatality risk:

- **Increases** 44 percent when carrying one passenger younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
- **Doubles** when carrying two passengers younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
- **Quadruples** when carrying three or more passengers younger than 21 (and no older passengers)

Conversely, carrying at least one passenger aged 35 or older cuts a teen driver's risk of death by 62 percent, and risk of involvement in any police-reported crash by 46 percent, highlighting the protective influence that parents and other adults have in the car.

The study analyzed data on crashes and the number of miles driven by 16- and 17-year-olds to assess the effect on a teen driver's safety of having passengers in the vehicle. Though widely accepted that passengers pose a risk, recent changes such as the adoption by most states of varying passenger restrictions for novice teen drivers and a substantial overall decline in teen traffic fatalities beg the question of just how significant the risk is.

Despite recent progress, the new report confirms that carrying young passengers (under 21) is still a major risk factor for 16- and 17-year-old drivers.

"We know that carrying young passengers is a huge risk, but it's also a preventable one," said AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety President and CEO Peter Kissinger. "These findings should send a clear message to families that parents can make their teens safer immediately by refusing to allow them to get in the car with other young people, whether they're behind the wheel or in the passenger seat."

"The connection between carrying young passengers and increased fatal crash risk is clear, and placing appropriate limits is a key part of graduated driver licensing in Virginia," said Georjeane Blumling, Vice President of Public Relations for AAA Tidewater Virginia. "By limiting the number of passengers that 16- and 17-year-old drivers can have in the car, these policies help ensure that teens stay focused on the road and gain the experience they need to become safe drivers. It's critical, too, that parents enforce the law and family rules that restrict passengers and help keep their teens safe."

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Additionally, given the significant decrease in risk seen when adults 35 and older were present, parents and guardians can also help protect novice teen drivers by spending more time in the car with them.

“The AAA Foundation is dedicated to reducing the number of fatalities on our roadways, and we want to get the message out when we see an opportunity to reduce the risk of a crash or fatality among the riskiest drivers on the road,” said Kissinger. “Parents and teens together can reduce this risk today.”

AAA Foundation urges families to consider these steps:

- Know the graduated driver licensing system for your state, and remember: *even if the law doesn't set a passenger limit, parents can*
- Sign a parent-teen driving agreement that stipulates teens will not ride as passengers of teen drivers without a parent's advance permission
- Provide transportation alternatives for teens who honor that pledge
- Talk with other parents so they know the rules for your teen and will help enforce them
- Spend time as a passenger when your teen is at the wheel. Your presence and your guidance help make your teen a safer driver
- Visit [www.TeenDriving.AAA.com](http://www.TeenDriving.AAA.com) for resources that can help teens become safer drivers, including a parent-teen driving agreement covering safety risks like passengers, cell-phone use and night driving

AAA and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety have long-standing commitments to improving teen driver safety through research and the development of science-based tools and resources. For a copy of the study, or to learn more about our work in this focus area, visit [www.aaafoundation.org](http://www.aaafoundation.org). For additional resources, visit [www.TeenDriving.AAA.com](http://www.TeenDriving.AAA.com).

*Established by AAA in 1947, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, publicly-supported charitable educational and research organization. Dedicated to saving lives and reducing injuries on our roads, the Foundation's mission is to prevent crashes and save lives through research and education about traffic safety. The Foundation has funded over 200 research projects designed to discover the causes of traffic crashes, prevent them, and minimize injuries when they do occur. This research is used to develop dozens of focused, high-impact educational materials for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users. Visit <http://www.aaafoundation.org> or [www.facebook.com/AAAFTS](http://www.facebook.com/AAAFTS) for more information on how you can join our cause.*

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