



## News Release

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### **TEENS DRIVING TEENS IS A DEADLY MIX**

New research from AAA shows that risky behaviors climb when peer passengers are onboard

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (October 11, 2012) – Risky behaviors among 16 and 17 year old drivers involved in fatal crashes increased when teen passengers were present, according to a study presented today by AAA and conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. With motor vehicle crashes ranking as the leading cause of death for teens, AAA is calling for greater parental involvement and stronger graduated driver's licensing programs to promote road safety.

The new research, released as part of Teen Driver Safety Week (Oct. 14-20), shows that the prevalence of risky behaviors generally grew for 16 and 17 year old drivers as the number of teen passengers increased. Among young drivers involved in fatal crashes:

- The prevalence of speeding increased from 30 to 44 percent with two teen passengers and 48 percent with three or more
- The prevalence of late-night driving (11 p.m. to 5 a.m.) increased from 17 to 22 percent with two teen passengers and 28 percent with three or more
- The prevalence of alcohol use increased from 13 to 17 percent with teen passengers and 18 percent with three or more

“Mixing young drivers with teen passengers can have dangerous consequences,” said Georjeane Blumling. “AAA urges parents to set and consistently enforce family rules that limit newly licensed teens from driving with young passengers.”

In Virginia, newly licensed teen drivers are allowed only one teen passenger (who is not a family member) for the first year of driving under eighteen years of age (<http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/citizen/drivers/restrictions.asp>).

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety analyzed data on fatal crashes that occurred in the United States from 2005 through 2010. The report documents the prevalence of passengers ages 13-19 in fatal crashes involving drivers age 16 and 17, and examines the characteristics of those crashes according to age, sex and number of teen passengers present. Researchers found that 9,578 drivers age 16 and 17 were involved in fatal crashes, and that 3,994 of these included at least one teen passenger.

“Teen crashes remain a huge problem nationwide,” said AAA Foundation President and CEO Peter Kissinger. “Our past research clearly shows how young passengers substantially increase a novice driver's risk of being in a fatal crash, and these new findings underscore the need to refocus our efforts, to address the problem, from state legislatures to parents.”

AAA recommends that all states adopt and enforce a comprehensive three-stage (learner's

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permit, intermediate/probationary license, full/unrestricted license) graduated license system for novice drivers. These programs should limit driving at night and driving with young passengers, among other provisions designed to help novice drivers gain the skills and experience associated with responsible driving behavior.

“Graduated driver licensing programs have been shown to greatly reduce crashes, injuries and deaths for everyone on the road when they limit new teen drivers to no more than one passenger,” continued Blumling. “Steps parents can take, such as setting and enforcing a parent-teen driving agreement, can build on state laws to improve safety by gradually easing teens into driving.”

This study builds on a AAA Foundation report released in May that shows how risk of death in a traffic crash for 16 and 17 year old drivers increases by 44 percent when carrying one passenger younger than 21, doubles with two and quadruples with three or more younger passengers, compared with driving alone. A previous study by the AAA Foundation found that potentially distracting loud conversation and horseplay were substantially more common with multiple teenage passengers in the vehicle than with siblings or adult passengers.

Teen drivers face a number of safety challenges including:

- Teenage drivers are involved in more crashes per mile than drivers of any other age group.
- Drivers aged 16 to 17 are involved in about seven times as many crashes per mile driven compared to drivers in their forties, fifties or sixties.
- Teenage drivers are over represented in crashes that result in the death of other people, such as their passengers, pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles.

AAA has a wide range of tools available at [TeenDriving.AAA.com](http://TeenDriving.AAA.com) to help parents simplify the learning-to-drive process including parent-teen driving agreements, online webinars, licensing information and free online information developed from a National Institutes of Health program.

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