**2023 NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK**

**PARENT AUDIENCE**

**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]**

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**In the Driver’s Seat:  
Parents Are the Key to Teen Driving Success  
  
Talk to Teens About the Importance of Driving Safety  
During National Teen Driver Safety Week**

**[City, State]** — National Teen Driver Safety Week is October 15-21, 2023. The week serves as an opportunity for parents and guardians to have a conversation with teens about safe driving habits. This year, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is teaming up with **[Local Organization]** to empower parents to discuss safe driving habits with their young drivers. Your teen driver needs to know the [Rules of the Road](https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/get-materials/teen-safety/national-teen-driver-safety-week/rules-road) before you hand over the keys. Ultimately, parents are in control.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens (15-18 years old) in the United States. There were 2,608 people killed in crashes involving a teen passenger vehicle driver (15-18 years old) in 2021; 861 of the deaths were the teen driver. In 2021, an estimated 94,201 teen passenger vehicle drivers were injured in motor vehicle traffic crashes and an estimated 170,083 people were injured in crashes involving a teen driver, accounting for almost 7% of all those injured on the roadway that year.

“Teens are watching what their parents do and say,” said **[Local Leader]**. “For this reason, parents play a critical role in teaching teen drivers safe driving habits. New teen drivers are still gaining experience behind the wheel, which increases the chance of dangerous situations for the teen and other roadway users around them,” **[he/she]** said. “This is why it’s so important for parents to have these discussions with their teens. Start the conversation today and continue it every day. NHTSA [offers parents and guardians helpful tips](https://www.nhtsa.gov/parents-and-caregivers?_ga=2.201927633.1703444265.1628169470-1835012113.1628080924) and a framework for having discussions with teen drivers about risky driving behaviors that can lead to fatal consequences.”

It’s a parent’s responsibility to help teen drivers make smart choices to stay safe on the road. NHTSA gives parents and guardians [tips](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving) on how to talk about safer driving. These tips include discussions on how to influence positive behaviors and how to approach dangerous and deadly driving behaviors such as alcohol and other drug use, lack of seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, or driving with passengers.

NHTSA’s website, [www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving), has detailed information and statistics on teen driving, and outlines tips parents can use to address teen driver safety risks:

1. **Impaired Driving:** While teens are too young to legally buy, possess, or consume alcohol, nationally, 19% of teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2021 had alcohol in their system. Alcohol isn’t the only substance that can keep teens from driving safely: marijuana affects a driver’s ability to react to their surroundings. Remind teens that driving under the influence of any impairing substance — including illicit or prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medication — can have deadly consequences. Let teens know that positive driving behaviors are rewarded with the continued privilege to drive.
2. **Seat Belt Safety:** Wearing a seat belt is a simple way teens can stay safer in a vehicle. Unfortunately, too many teens aren’t buckling up. Over half (51%) of the teen passenger vehicle drivers who died in crashes in 2021 were unbuckled. Teen drivers and passengers are more likely to die in a crash if they are unbuckled (nine out of 10 of the passengers who died were also unbuckled). Empower teens to stand strong and confirm everyone is buckled before the vehicle moves. Reward teens with driving privileges for buckling up every trip, every time, and requiring their passengers to do the same.
3. **Distracted Driving:** Cell phone use while driving is more than just risky — it can be deadly. Texting while driving is outlawed in 49 states, Washington DC, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Remind teens about the dangers of using a phone while driving and clarify that any phone use (texting, talking, or using any social media apps) is unacceptable. Even if they are stopped at a light, remind teens that posting on social media while driving is unacceptable *and* illegal.

Distracted driving isn’t limited to cell phone use. Other passengers, audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distractions for any driver. According to the most recent data available, in 2021, among teen drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes, 7% were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. Remind teens that headphones are not appropriate to wear while driving a vehicle. All drivers need to be able to hear another vehicle’s horn or the siren from an emergency vehicle, so they can safely move over and out of the path.

1. **Speed Limits:** Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, but it’s especially deadly for teens with less experience. In 2021, almost one-third (32%) of all teen drivers of passenger vehicles 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. Remind teens to always drive within the speed limit.
2. **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 can help teen drivers by discussing risky driving behaviors. Self-reported surveys show that teens whose parents set firm rules for driving typically engaged in less risky driving behaviors and were involved in fewer crashes.

Teens need to understand the rules, whether there are any other restrictions outlined in **[State]**’s graduated driver licensing [(GDL) law](http://www.ghsa.org/state-laws), and the deadly consequences that could occur. By knowing and enforcing the laws, the teen driver’s safety and that of other road users can be improved.

“While teens will learn much of this content in driver education, nothing replaces the conversations that take place at home or in the car. Parents should set these rules before handing over the car keys,” **[Local Leader]** said. “Parents need to be proactive and start the conversation about safe driving during National Teen Driver Safety Week, then keep the conversations going every day. Teaching teens safe behaviors behind the wheel is a shared responsibility, and we all have a part to play.”

For more information about National Teen Driver Safety, visit [www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving).

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