



Talking to your teen about driver safety

- As a parent, it is a big decision to allow your child to drive. Getting behind the wheel is a huge responsibility and the dangers of driving are inevitable, regardless of technique and preparation.
- Each year more than 35 teens are killed on Nevada roadways, where almost 60% die as a result of failing to wear their seat belt. Talk to your teen about wearing their seat belt at all times, no exceptions, no excuses.
- Your teen is responsible for the safety of all passengers in his or her car. In a crash, an unbelted passenger can become a projectile and continue flying until something stops him: like the driver or another passenger in the car. In a crash at 30 mph, he or she could fly into the front seat (and beyond) with a force of over two tons. That's one way to lose a friend. Talk to your teen about making sure their passengers buckle up as well.
- Teens are often insensitive to the dangers of the road and may feel as if they are invincible. It is important for you to express these dangers to your teen and help him or her realize that accidents happen even if it is not their fault. Increase your teen's awareness by providing interesting and compelling safety information from supporting web sites. Log on to:

Nevada Dept of Public Safety—Office of Traffic Safety: www.ots.state.nv.us

Driver's Edge, a teen safe driving program: <http://www.driversedge.org> ;

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia/Keeping Young Drivers Safe:

<http://www.chop.edu/consumer/jsp/division/generic.jsp?id=84822> ;

Burden of Choice: <http://www.burdenofchoice.com/index.html> ;

Keep the Drive: <http://www.keepthedrive.com> ;

National Organizations for Youth Safety: <http://noys.org> ;

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/teenmvh.htm> ;

JOIN Together: <http://www.jointogether.org> ;

- There are many actions a driver can take to avoid dangerous situations. Along with obeying all traffic laws and speed limits, it is important to talk to your teen about other factors that impact their safety behind the wheel. Some of these outside factors include rainy, snowy or windy weather, physical road conditions, and construction.

- Other dangerous situations are created by the driver when his or her full attention is not dedicated to the road. It is important to talk to your teen about not using a cell phone, eating, or fidgeting with the stereo while driving. Emphasize that driving requires a person's full attention and losing that attention for a split second can compromise the safety of the driver, his or her passengers, and occupants of other vehicles.
- It is essential to talk to your teen about consuming alcohol or drugs before driving. In 2006, 21 percent of teen traffic fatalities occurred while the driver was under the influence; 36% of the teen *passengers* that died were under the influence. Talk to your teen about alternatives to driving under the influence. Make sure that they know that it is never okay to drink and drive.
- Give your teen the opportunity to ask questions and voice his or her concerns about driving. Getting behind the wheel is a giant step in a teen's life and it can be quite confusing. Be sure that your teen knows that you are available at any time to answer questions.