

Teen Driver Safety in Nebraska

Nebraska's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system was implemented in 1998 and updated in 2008. GDL laws were implemented in states across the country because they introduce teens to various driving situations to gain experience while keeping them out of high risk situations thus reducing crash rates. Since implementation of the law, Nebraska teen crashes resulting in injury or death have dropped by 57%.¹ Although death rates have dropped, motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for teens.

Teen Driver Statistics

In 2019, 21 Nebraska teens ages 13-19 lost their lives due to motor vehicle crashes.² According to the Nebraska Department of Transportation Highway Safety Office:

- **76% of the 2019 teen traffic fatalities in Nebraska (drivers and passengers ages 13-19) were not wearing seatbelts.**²
- Nationally, 55% of teens who died from a motor vehicle crash were not wearing their seat belts.³
- 31% of teen drivers that crashed were using a cell phone.³
- While teen drivers make up 7.4% of all licensed drivers across the state, they accounted for 21% of all reported crashes in 2019.²
- 94% of Nebraskan teens surveyed identified distractions such as texting while driving as a risk. However 65% of the same teens admitted to texting while driving "some or a lot" in the past month.⁴

How Do Teen Motor Vehicle Crashes Affect Nebraska

According to Nebraska CODES (2013-2017), an unrestrained teen had three times the medical charges compared to a restrained teen (\$13,012 vs \$4,805). Hospital inpatient charges were \$23,000 higher for unrestrained teens; average emergency room charges were nearly twice as high among unrestrained teens (\$5,493 vs \$3,179).

The projected cost estimate for Nebraska teen drivers (age 15-19) involved in motor vehicle crashes in 2019 was \$114,346,000. This cost estimate includes wage and productivity losses, medical expenses, administrative expenses, motor vehicle damage, and employer costs.⁵ Also, beyond costs, families and communities are greatly affected by this early loss of life.

Strategies to Decrease Teen-related Motor Vehicle Crashes

Comprehensive GDL (Graduated Driver Licensing) Laws

Every state has GDL provisions in place. These provisions have significantly reduced teen crash rates. States with the most comprehensive GDL provisions see reductions of all types of crashes in the age groups directly affected by the rules.⁶ Current GDL best practices as developed by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) are:

Licensing

- Learner stage entry age of 16, 1 year in length, 80-120 driving hours and driver's education.
- Intermediate stage entry age of 17, 1 year in length and advanced drivers education.
- Unrestricted stage entry age of 18.

Intermediate Stage Driving Restrictions

- Unsupervised night time driving restriction starting at 9-10 p.m. and ending no earlier than 5 a.m.;
- Zero to one teenage passenger with the exception of supervising driver and family;
- Seat belt requirements for driver and passengers;
- Zero alcohol tolerance;
- No use of phone/electronic devices;
- License plate identifiers (decal) required to improve compliance.⁷

All driving restrictions are enforced as a primary action. Each restriction plays a role in reducing teen related motor vehicle crashes including lower rates of insurance collision claims among 16-17 year olds.⁸

Nebraska GDL Licensing

- School Learner Permit entry age 14 years
- School Permit entry age 14 years 3 months
- Learner Permit entry age 15 years
- Provisional Operators Permit (POP) entry age 16 years
- Unrestricted license entry age 17 years

Nebraska teens can either log 50 hours of driving or complete a driver education course to obtain their permit. They must also pass required testing at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Nebraska Permit Driving Restrictions

- A holder of a School Permit may only transport family members who reside with them to the school attended by the holder;
- A holder of a Provisional Operators Permit (POP) shall not drive from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. unless from school, school activities or work;
- A holder of a POP is limited to one passenger younger than 19 who is not a family member for the first six months;
- No use of any type of interactive wireless communication device;
- Zero tolerance for driving while under the influence;
- All occupants must wear a [seat belt](#).

All Nebraska driving restrictions are enforced as a secondary action. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) GDL calculator, if Nebraska matched the best practices in GDL components (learner permit age 16, 70 practice hours, license (POP) age 17 years, 9 p.m.

night driving restriction, no passengers), it is estimated that there would be a 27% reduction in collision claims and a 45% reduction in fatal crashes.⁹

Parental Involvement

According to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Center for Injury Research and Prevention, involved parents who set rules and monitor their teens’ driving behavior in a supportive way can lower their teens’ crash risk by half.¹⁰ Parents can be more engaged through use of a [parent-teen driving agreement](#), and by increasing their understanding of [GDL provisions](#), enforcing current GDL laws to increase compliance, and role modeling safe driving behaviors such as wearing a seat belt and obeying traffic laws.¹¹

Peer-to-Peer Education

[Peer-to-peer education](#) is an intervention in which teens develop and deliver messages to their peers in order to create awareness, increase knowledge and change behavior. One such program, Teens in the Driver Seat, focuses solely on traffic safety and addresses the most common risks to teens: driving at night, distractions (passenger, cell phone use, etc.), speeding, not wearing a seat belt, and alcohol use. Analysis of the program indicates awareness of common risks improved 40 to 200%, seat belt use averaged 11% higher, and cell phone use/texting was 30% lower at “program schools” compared to a control group of schools at which the program was never deployed.¹²

Nebraska has been implementing the Teens in the Driver Seat program in schools across the state since the 2013-2014 school year. Every year, a teen driving experiences survey is conducted to track progress in teen driver and passenger behavior and knowledge. A five year trend report of the program shows reductions in 16 of 17 and statistically significant reductions in 10 of 17 risky driving behaviors.⁴ The schools that had five years of consecutive data showed a four point reduction in the number of students who rode in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, a ten point reduction in the number of students who drove a vehicle with passengers who did not wear a seat belt, and an 11 point reduction in the number of students who drove without wearing a seatbelt.

Driver’s Education

A study of more than 150,000 Nebraska teen drivers was conducted by the Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The study compared teens who took driver education courses to those that logged 50 hours of supervised driving. Results showed teens that took driver education courses were less likely to be involved in crashes or to commit traffic violations during their first two years of driving compared to teens who completed 50 hours of practice driving under the supervision of a parent or other adult.¹³

Cited Sources

¹Nebraska Department of Transportation Highway Safety Office (NDOT HSO). *Drivers-Ages 16 to 20 Fatal and Injury Crashes Before and After Graduated Licensing Law*. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <http://dot.nebraska.gov/media/6615/tn20-allflnjgdl.pdf>

- ²NDOT HSO. *2019 Nebraska Teen Driver Facts*. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <https://dot.nebraska.gov/media/114022/tndvrfacts2019.pdf>
- ³National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). *Motor Vehicle Occupant Protection Facts*. March 2016. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/812251-youthfactsbook2016.pdf>
- ⁴Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Injury Prevention Program. *Nebraska Teen Driving Experiences Survey Five Year Trend Report*. March 2020. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Motor-Vehicle-Safety.aspx>
- ⁵NDOT HSO. *Nebraska Cost Estimate for Teen Driver (15-19) Involved in Motor-Vehicle Crashes in 2019*. Retrieved January 25, 2021. http://dot.nebraska.gov/media/6593/tnallcrhcosts15_19.pdf
- ⁶AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. *Graduated Driver Licensing Research Review*. November 2012. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <https://aaafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/GDLResearchReviewReport.pdf>
- ⁷Traffic Injury Research Foundation. *A New GDL Framework: Planning for the Future*. Retrieved January, 2021. <http://tirf.ca/projects/new-gdl-framework-planning-future/>
- ⁸Trempel, R.E. 2009. *Graduated driver licensing laws and insurance collision claim frequencies of teenage drivers*s. Arlington, VA: Highway Loss Data Institute. Retrieved January 25, 2021.
- ⁹Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. *GDL crash reduction calculator*. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <https://www.iihs.org/topics/teenagers/gdl-calculator>
- ¹⁰Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute. *Teen Driver Source, Parent Support is Key*. Retrieved January 25, 2021. http://www.teendriversource.org/more_pages/page/parent_support_is_key/for_parents
- ¹¹Anne T. McCartt, Ph.D, *Rounding the Next Curve on the Road Toward Reducing Teen Drivers’ Crash Risk*. Journal of Adolescent Health 2013; 53: 3-5.
- ¹²Henk R, Pezoldt V, Womack K. *Effectiveness of the “Teens in the Driver Seat Program” in Texas*. Texas Transportation Institute, October 2007. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <http://d2dtl5nnlpfr0r.cloudfront.net/tti.tamu.edu/documents/0-5657-1.pdf>
- ¹³Shell D, Newman I, Cordova-Cazar A, Heese J. *Driver Education and teen crashes and traffic violations in the first two years of driving in a graduated licensing system*. Accident Analysis and Prevention. 2015; 82:45-42.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prevention Status Report, Motor Vehicle Injuries: Nebraska. Status of Policy and Practice Solutions. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2016. Retrieved January 25, 2021. <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/psr/?state=Nebraska>

2021 Roadmap of State Highway Safety Laws: Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.
Retrieved January 25, 2021. <https://saferoads.org/roadmap-reports/>

Motor Vehicle Occupant Protection Facts: Children, Youth and Young Adults, March 2016.
National High Traffic Safety Administration. Retrieved January 25, 2021.
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/812251-youthfactsbook2016.pdf>

Reducing Risks for Teen Drivers. Safe Kids Worldwide May 2016. Retrieved January 25, 2021.
<http://www.safekids.org/research-report/reducing-risks-teen-drivers>

A New GDL Framework: Planning for the Future. Traffic Injury Research Foundation, Retrieved
January 25, 2021. <https://tirf.ca/projects/new-gdl-framework-planning-future/>

DHHS Injury Prevention Program Driving the Right Message:
<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Motor-Vehicle-Safety.aspx>

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Updated 1/26/2021