

# Graduated Driver Licensing In Nebraska

Nebraska's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system was implemented in 1998 and updated in 2008. Since implementation of the law, teen crashes resulting in injury or death has dropped by 59%.<sup>1</sup> GDL laws work because they introduce teens to various driving situations to gain experience while keeping them out of high risk situations.

## Teen Driver Statistics

In 2015, 18 Nebraska teens ages 14-19 lost their lives due to motor vehicle crashes. This is the leading cause of death and injury for Nebraska teens. According to the Nebraska Department of Roads Highway Safety Office:

- Of the 18 who died as a result of traffic crashes, 72% (13) were not wearing safety belts.
- Seven teens ages 14-19 were ejected from the vehicle.
- Nationally, 58% of teens who died from a motor vehicle crash were not wearing their seat belts.<sup>2</sup>
- Sixty-four percent of Nebraska teens admit to texting while driving (Nebraska Teen Driver Experiences Survey, 2015). In 2015, teen drivers were involved in 27% of crashes in which a cell phone was used.<sup>3</sup>

## How Does Teen Motor Vehicle Crashes Affect Nebraska?

According to the 2013 Nebraska Teen Driver Report, when comparing teens to other age groups, Nebraska teens are dying in motor vehicle crashes at three times the rate of the average adult. An unrestrained teen had double the average emergency room charges compared to a restrained teen (\$8,184.89 vs \$3,624.90) and hospital inpatient charges averaged \$5,000 higher for an unrestrained teen.<sup>4</sup>

According to the National Safety Council, the projected cost estimate for Nebraska teen drivers (age 15-19) involved in motor vehicle crashes in 2015 was \$150,547,600. The cost estimate includes wage and productivity losses, medical expenses, administrative expenses, motor vehicle damage, and employer costs.<sup>5</sup>

## Strategies to Decrease Teen-related Motor Vehicle Crashes: Comprehensive GDL Laws

GDL laws are in place in every state and have significantly reduced teen crash rates. States with the most comprehensive GDL programs see reductions of all types of crashes in the age groups directly affected by the rules especially 16-year-old drivers.<sup>6</sup> Current GDL best practices are:

- Minimum intermediate license at 17 years of age
- Minimum permit at 16 years of age
- 70 required hours of supervised practice driving
- Night time driving restriction starting at 8 p.m. during the intermediate stage
- Ban on all teen passengers.<sup>7</sup>

Each restriction plays a role in reducing teen related motor vehicle crashes including lower rates of insurance collision claims among 16-17 year olds.<sup>8</sup>

## Nebraska GDL licensing and driving restrictions include the following: Licensing

- School Learner Permit at age 14 years of age
- School Permit at 14 years 3 months years of age
- Learner Permit at 15 years of age
- Provisional Operators Permit (POP) at 16 years of age

Nebraska teens can either log 50 hours of driving or take a driver education course to obtain their permit along with required testing at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

## 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 POP driving shall not drive from 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. unless from school 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 (permit age 16, 70 practice hours, license age 17 years, 8 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.<sup>9</sup>

## 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.<sup>10</sup> Parents can be more engaged through use of a parent-teen driving agreement such as Checkpoints<sup>11</sup>, increase their understanding of GDL provisions, enforce current GDL laws to increase compliance and role model safe driving behaviors such as wearing a seat belt and obeying traffic laws.

## 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 within a school setting. One such program, Teens in the Driver Seat, focuses solely on traffic safety and addresses the most common risks to teens while driving: driving at night; distractions (passenger, cell phone use, etc.); speeding; not wearing a seat belt; and alcohol use. Analysis of the program indicate awareness of the common risks has improved 40 to 200%, seat belt use was on average 11% higher and cell phone use/texting 30% lower at "program schools" as compared to a control group of schools at which the program has never been deployed.<sup>12</sup>

## Driver's Education

A study was conducted of more than 150,000 Nebraska teen drivers by the Nebraska Prevention Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse, University of Nebraska-Lincoln comparing teens who took driver education courses and those that did the 50 hour log. They found that teen's taking driver education courses are less likely to be involved in crashes or to receive a traffic violation during their first two years of driving compared to teen's who completed 50 hours of practice driving under the supervision of a parent or other adult.<sup>13</sup>

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## Resources

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