

**News Release
For Immediate Release**

The 100 Deadliest Days for Teens Parents, Talk to Your Teen About Safe Driving

Now that school is out and summer is officially underway, many parents are seeing their teens doing more driving. Unfortunately, most parents are not aware that Memorial Day kicks off what is called "The 100 Deadliest Days for Teens" when it comes to teen vehicle crashes. According to the American Automobile Association (AAA) over the past five years, the average number of crashes involving drivers ages 16-19 increased 16% per day during the "100 Deadliest Days," when compared with other days of the year.

A study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety shows that distracted driving among teens was a factor in nearly 6 out of 10 moderate to severe teen crashes. This is much higher than the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) previous estimate that distraction is involved in 14% of teen crashes. While distractions affect drivers of all ages, NHTSA has found that hand-held cell phone use is highest among 16- to 24-year-olds. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted. In Texas, 46 percent of urban teens and 52 percent of rural teens talk on a cell phone while driving, and nearly the same percentage text while driving. (Texas A&M Transportation Institute).

While cell phone use is an obvious danger for teen drivers, surprisingly the AAA Foundation study showed that the leading distraction for the teens was not cell phone use, but interacting with other passengers in the vehicle. Cell phone use came in as the second most common distraction. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of teens in a car. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behavior triples when traveling with multiple passengers. Distracted driving along with a teen's inexperience as a driver can be a deadly combination.

Research shows that parents play an important role in increasing their teen's driving skills because they have the greatest influence over their teen's behavior. In fact, leading experts believe parents play a key role in preventing teen car crashes and deaths. Teens with parents who set rules, monitor their driving, and are supportive are half as likely to crash and twice as likely to use seat belts as teens with less involved parents.

The Texas Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law is designed to prevent cell phone use as well as limit the number of teen passengers that can legally ride with a novice driver and provides parents with the controls to help keep their teen drivers safe. Many parents, however, are not aware of the provisions of this law, which is in force while the teen has a learner's permit as well as a provisional license. Making sure your teen follows the GDL law can help get a teen safely through the most critical time when driver inexperience can lead to crashes.

There are phone apps that can help reduce the temptation to text and drive, but no app can be totally depended upon to prevent a crash. Consumer Reports reviewed AT&T DriveMode, Sprint Drive First, and Verizon Safely Go. They found that all had some merit, but further developments are needed to make them more effective. There is no substitute for parent involvement in teen driving. For more information and helpful tips and resources on keeping your young driver safe on the road visit <http://driveithome.org/>.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent, Joanne Ureste, from Hidalgo County reminds all drivers to put away their cell phones and wait until they arrive at their destination. Although cell

phone use is the most recognizable distraction, all in-vehicle distractions are unsafe and can cause crashes or fatalities. Keep your eyes on the road and arrive alive!

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