

## **WSP: Graduations Mean Extra Emphasis On Teen Driving Safety**

### **Local News**

Posted by:

Posted on : June 11, 2012 at 4:25 am

OLYMPIA, Wash. - The months of May and June are always an exciting time for graduating seniors throughout the State of Washington and the entire United States. This is a pivotal point in teen and young adult's lives and it should be an accomplishment to be anticipated and celebrated. With that excitement and celebration are the inevitable teen graduation parties that will include alcohol and drug usage. And, sadly, despite the constant messaging about the dangers involved, there seems to always be a tragic story that unfolds every year. The parent's worst nightmare becomes reality. Statistics point out that serious injury and fatality collisions have a high occurrence in the teen and young adult population. Over 1003 drivers age 16-25 yrs old have been killed in fatality collisions in the last few years. Many of these collisions involve speeding, alcohol and drug usage or some form of distracted driving. A recent NHTSA study said research found drivers under the age of 24 were much more likely to send and receive text messages while driving. Another study by AAA concluded that the likelihood of a teen driver being involved in a collision increases by half if carrying just one passenger. That likelihood increased by double with two passengers and quadrupled with three or more. Combine all of the above with inexperience and that equals HIGH RISK.

So do we throw up our hands and say "that's just part of growing up"? The answer from Law Enforcement, EMS and their various partners in public safety such as Traffic Safety Task Forces and MADD is a resounding NO. Through proactive educational programs such as the Every 15 Minutes and Mock Crash, both emphasizing DUI awareness and distracted driving. Through community school education programs that promote driver safety and awareness. By supporting and enforcing of provisional licensing laws for teens. Seatbelt and aggressive driving campaigns, the list is long. The end goal in all of these efforts is the same, to save lives. Yet, we cannot accomplish this alone and parents are a key player. Parents are role models. Set an example for your young drivers because they do model you. Talk candidly and often about drinking and driving. Know their friends personally and talk to them. Build the rapport that says you care and trust them to do the right thing when no one is looking.