

National Teen Driver Safety Week Celebrated in Washington State

Local News

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Grays Harbor County - Between October 18 and 24, Washington State will celebrate National Teen Driver Safety Week focusing not only on the laws governing new drivers in Washington, but on the impacts parents have on teens by setting limits and modeling responsible driving behavior. Research shows that parents are the single most important influence on their teen's driving.

As an advocate of young drivers developing safe, smart driving behaviors, State Farm® provided a grant to the Washington Traffic Safety Commission to reach and teach parents with humorous and interesting video vignettes. As well, the grant funds a new website specifically for Washington parents—a clearinghouse of useful information they can use as their teen begins their adventure in the driving world -www.washingtonteendrivingweek.com. The website will go live on October 15.

“As the leading insurer of automobiles nationally and in Washington State, we are compelled to also be a leader in reducing the number of crash-related injuries and deaths involving young and novice drivers. We work with and support partners like the Washington Traffic Safety Commission because they share our determination for changing risky behaviors and keeping us all safer behind the wheel,” said Nancy Carpenter, State Farm Public Affairs Specialist.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among teens age 16-19 in Washington, already taking the lives of 33 teens so far during 2009, and in 2007 and 2008, claiming the lives of 116 teens.

During 2008, 16-19 year-olds accounted for 4.2% of all licensed drivers, but 7.6% of all drivers in fatal crashes in Washington State. One in four crash fatalities in the United States involves a 16- to 24-year-old driver. Nationally, more than twenty teenagers die in car crashes every day.

On October 6, Governor Gregoire signed a Proclamation declaring October 18 – 24, Teen Driver Safety Week in Washington State.

National Teen Driver Safety Week is observed the third week of October, to bring attention to the number one killer of American teens, car crashes. During this week parents, young drivers,

lawmakers and educators are encouraged to focus on working together to change risky teen driving behaviors and help save lives. As a result of the combined goal of reducing injury and death from teen crashes, State Farm ® and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia teamed up in 2007 to support a Congressional resolution designating National Teen Driver Safety Week. Working together with many valued safety organizations, State Farm ® continues to provide leadership and advocacy around this national tragedy. For more information, go to www.statefarm.com/teendriving.

There are many ways parents can help their teens become safer drivers including:

Enforcing the Intermediate Driver Licensing (IDL) Law. Currently in Washington, in the first 6 months, teens cannot carry passengers under the age of 20, and in the next 6 months they can transport only three passengers at a time under the age of 20. As well, teens cannot drive from 1:00 AM to 5:00 AM. Then at age 18, a teen driver can get a full license without IDL laws.

Being a good driving example. Parents have the greatest influence on their teens' driving habits, behaviors, and skills.

Even though it may seem that teenagers ignore their parent's behavior and advice most of the time, keep in mind that kids learn from watching their parents. When driving with a teen, parents should model the behavior that they would like their teens to practice when they are behind the wheel: buckle up, slow down, and focus on the road.

- Considering establishing a teen/parent contract to clearly define driving expectations for the household. It's been shown to work. http://www.mtnbrook.k12.al.us/Images/ProductImage_9825.doc

Scheduling supervised practice driving. 50 hours is a minimum to learn the complicated skill of driving.

Watching teens driving correctly. Praise them when they use good judgment, discipline when needed and let them know the reasons why, and be honest.

Gradually introducing new privileges after a teen driver receives their license based on model driving behavior.

Restricting trips to those with a purpose and on low-speed roads.

For additional information about the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, visit www.wtsc.wa.gov.