

ROAD TO SAFETY

Teens Pick Up On Their Parents' Bad Driving Habits

(NAPSA)—Although they seem to be involved in listening to music, chatting with friends or gazing out the window, preteens and teens are actually keen observers—and students—of their parents' driving habits. A new study of more than 2,000 parents and children by Nationwide Mutual Insurance found that 83 percent of 10-to-18-year-olds pay attention to Mom's or Dad's driving at least half of the time they spend in the car.

While parents recognize they are being observed and need to lead by example, this intention often gets lost in practice. Two out of five parents surveyed say they curb their bad driving habits in front of their children, but most children report seeing their parents drive aggressively, feel around for items in the car, talk on cell phones and not wear seat belts.

Safety takes a turn for the better when children grow up around safe drivers and are armed with the tools and practices they need to be safe drivers themselves. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, automobile crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens. For 16-to-18-year-olds, they account for more than one-third of all deaths.

Teach by example

“Do as I say, not as I do” seems to be the philosophy of many parents when it comes to teaching their children safe driving behaviors,” said Bill Windsor, Nationwide associate vice president of safety. “Parents can help their children learn safe driving skills by putting safety into practice



Parents can communicate better with teens about safe driving by visiting HaveTheTalkAmerica.com.

whenever the ignition is turned on. They also need to discuss with their children what it means to be a smart driver well before it's time to take the permit test.”

Key findings from the study:

- While nearly half of parents report that they typically drive at or below the speed limit, 80 percent of children observe that their parents drive over the speed limit.
- More than half of children have observed their parents multitasking behind the wheel, not keeping both hands on the steering wheel, and/or arguing and yelling at other drivers.
- One-third of kids surveyed have been scared by a parent's driving and 53 percent of parents have been scared when riding with their teen driving.
- More than half of children have not told their parents how they feel about their driving.
- 27 percent of teens with their driver's license have never had formal instruction and have learned from watching their parents and other people drive.

For more information about teen driving and how parents and children can discuss safe driving, please visit www.HaveTheTalkAmerica.com.