

SAFETY SENSE

Sixteen And Spinning Their Wheels

(NAPSA)—Is 16 too young to drive? Ask most 16-year-olds and they will say no. According to the laws in most states, 16-year-olds are old enough to drive.

The statistics, however, may put the brake on some driving ambitions.

Statistics indicate that this age group is involved in the largest number of accidents, with 81 percent of the fatal crashes involving 16-year-olds attributed to inexperience. Sixteen-year-old drivers have nearly 300 percent more crashes per miles driven than do 18-year-olds.

There are steps parents can take to improve the odds of their teen driving safely. Here are some guidelines suggested by the experts at AARP Auto and Homeowners Insurance Program provided by The Hartford:

- First, make it clear to your child that not everyone has to get a license at 16. It's your decision. Evaluate your child's maturity level and base your decision on that.

- Observe your child's driving skills and determine a required amount of supervised driving time.

- Teach young drivers how to handle emergency situations and offer tips on how to drive in adverse conditions. New drivers need experience driving at night, and in such conditions as snow and rain.

- Formal driving education is



A driver's license is only the beginning. Young drivers need valuable experience.

just the beginning. Young drivers need to practice the skills they have learned.

- The parent is the role model, so set an example and obey the traffic laws. Use your safety belt. Obey the speed limit.

- Limit late night driving.

- Make it clear that inappropriate driving will have negative consequences. Aimless joy riding can lead to trouble. Drinking and driving is unacceptable. Remind them that if they need a safe way home, you are always available.

Back up your restrictions with facts. Let teens know you trust them, but that trust does not equal valuable experience.

For a free brochure titled *Sixteen-Year-Old Drivers*, write to: AARP Auto and Homeowners Insurance Program, 200 Executive Blvd., Southington, CT 06489.