

Pointers For Parents

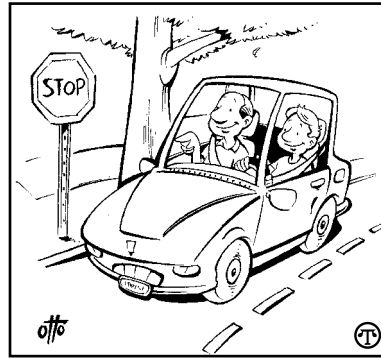
Steer Young Drivers Towards Safety

(NAPSA)—A growing number of parents are helping to put the brakes on some tragic driving statistics.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15-to-20-year-olds in the U.S. While young drivers make up only nine percent of licensed drivers, they account for 15 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes, according to government statistics.

Fortunately, there are specific steps parents can take to help protect their teenage drivers. Beyond mandatory driver education courses for new drivers, safety experts at GEICO, the country's largest direct marketer of auto insurance, recommend these parental actions:

- Lead by example and be a safe driving role model for young drivers.
- After teens get their licenses, provide them with as much adult-supervised driving time as possible.
- Make new drivers wait before letting them drive with friends in the vehicle. Statistics show that the tendency of new drivers to be distracted by others in the car increases the likelihood of an accident.
- Prohibit late-night driving. It often promotes higher risk behavior among teenagers.



Many parents are taking steps to help ensure their teenagers' safety on the roads.

- Make sure your teen drivers wear safety belts every time they get into a car.
- Select mid-size or larger cars with safety features like air bags for your teens to drive. Avoid "power" or "muscle" cars that can encourage high-risk behavior.
- Talk to your teens about the dangers of driving after consuming drugs or alcohol.

Experts say the primary cause of young driver auto crashes are driver inexperience (particularly in bad weather), driver distraction, excessive speed and use of alcohol or drugs. Parents can greatly increase the safety of their teenage drivers by helping them avoid these pitfalls.