

# In The Driver's Seat

## Keeping Teens On The Road To Safety

by Bobby Hamilton

(NAPSA)—According to the latest information from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), teens have the highest crash risk of any drivers, at nearly four times that of drivers over 20. In fact, the IIHS says 39 percent of all deaths of 16- to 19-year-olds are caused by car accidents, making it the leading public health problem for teenagers.



**Bobby Hamilton**

It's the parents' responsibility to teach kids how to be safe in the driver's seat. My son became a race car driver while he was still in his teens, so I really understand the fear of putting your child behind the wheel.

"It is more important than ever to think 'Safety First' before teens get behind the wheel and onto the open road," said Brad Eggleston, vice president of AutoVantage, a leading car care and travel assistance group.

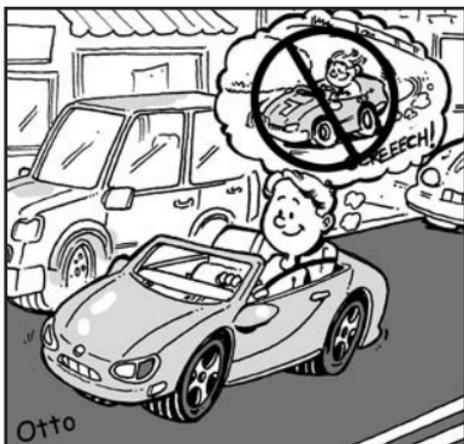
Here are a few tips for parents:

1. Give the driver's seat to your teen. Recent reports suggest teens need between 25 and 50 hours of supervised driving before getting a license. Stay calm. If you panic, so will your child. Cover parking, multiple lanes, various road types, weather conditions and different days and times. Draw attention to safety hazards and day-to-day conflicts. Simple, straightforward instructions are best.

2. Limit the number of friends allowed in the car when your child drives.

3. Wear your seat belt. Some 63 percent of fatally injured teens are unrestrained. Lead by example.

4. Continue to periodically ride with your licensed teen. The sud-



**Teen drivers should remember racing is meant for the track and not the highway.**

den freedom he or she gains with a license can result in risky behavior, such as speeding. Teens are new to the road and can be overconfident.

5. No cell phone. The IIHS says drivers with cell phones are four times more likely to be involved in crashes that result in injuries.

6. Drinking and driving don't mix. Make yourself available should things get out of hand. Blood alcohol concentrations as low as 0.02 percent can hinder a driver's ability to track moving targets.

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*Bobby Hamilton, a spokesman for AutoVantage, is the 2004 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series Champion.*