

What's Killing Our Teens?

U.S. Survey Describes The Factors Contributing To Vehicle Crashes

(NAPSA)—From cell phones to chatty friends, teens are driving under very risky conditions that contribute to motor vehicle crashes, their No. 1 killer. According to nearly 6,000 high school students surveyed by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm, most teens recognize the hazards of drinking and driving, but there is a long list of distractions and other factors that lead to teen auto crashes. In the National Young Driver Survey, teens admitted to driving under extremely dangerous conditions, including while talking on cell phones, text messaging, driving fatigued, riding with multiple passengers, having high emotions, speeding and not wearing seat belts.

"Research has told us a lot about which teens get into crashes, but we don't know enough about the why," says Flaura K. Winston, M.D., Ph.D., co-scientific director and founder of the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and principal investigator of the National Young Driver Survey. "With this survey, we asked teens directly: What is happening when your peers drive that is making them unsafe?"

Key findings about teen experiences in cars show:

- 75 percent of teens see peers driving fatigued
- 90 percent see passenger behavior that distracts the driver
- 20 percent of 11th graders report being in a crash as a driver in the past year

The survey also revealed the important role that the teens see for their parents:

- 66 percent say that they care about their parents' opinions on cell phone use while driving
- 56 percent of them rely on parents to learn how to drive
- 39 percent of their parents provide total financial responsibility for their driving.



In 2005, almost 7,500 15- to 20-year-old drivers were involved in fatal crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The fatality rate for drivers aged 16 to 19, based on miles driven, is four times that of drivers aged 25 to 69 years.

"Our goal is to help young drivers become better drivers and to make the roads safer for all," says Laurette Stiles, vice president strategic resources at State Farm. "We want to provide the tools and resources to help teens avoid hazards, make better decisions and ultimately to save lives. By combining the research expertise of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the vast resources available at State Farm, this multiyear research and outreach initiative will make a difference in saving lives."

As the first phase of this research, State Farm and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia conducted the National Young Driver Survey. The findings represent 10.6 million ninth-, 10th- and 11th-grade students in all public high schools in the United States.

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm have a proven track record in conducting research and implementing programs that have helped reduce injuries and fatalities of children in motor vehicle crashes through Partners for Child Passenger Safety. Parents and teens can learn more about the latest research and recommendations on safe driving for teens at www.chop.edu/youngdrivers and www.statefarm.com.