



Oregon Department of Transportation

NEWS RELEASE

Driver and Motor Vehicles Division

Oct. 4, 2007
07-164

More Information: John Harvey, 503-986-4413
Or David House, 503-945-5270

Oregon teen driving laws improve safety, support value of driver education, national study says

The first six months after obtaining a driver license tend to be the most dangerous for teenage drivers across the nation, but Oregon's graduated driver licensing program has improved safety since it started in 2000, according to a new study.

"I'm pleased that the Oregon Driver Education program is saving lives and reducing injuries," said Troy E. Costales, administrator of Transportation Safety at the Oregon Department of Transportation. "The study shows we are succeeding in making our newest drivers better and safer and dramatically reducing the potential negative impacts of teen driving."

Graduated driver licensing in Oregon, as in most other states, places a variety of restrictions on drivers younger than 18, an age when novice drivers are gaining experience behind the wheel.

"After GDL implementation, conviction and suspension rates were lower for all age groups, even among the unrestricted 18- and 19-year-old novice drivers," according to the study released Sept. 24 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (www.nhtsa.gov).

"Particularly for 16-year-old drivers, suspensions and crashes dropped by the second year of GDL implementation," the study said. "The drivers who show the most improved safety are those who were most affected by the law, though enhanced safety is seen even in older teens (18- to 19-year-old drivers) who are not restricted by GDL regulations."

Parents' involvement in supervising their teenage children's driving is a key in improved safety, the study found.

“The clearest safety improvements (e.g., 16-year-old drivers in their first six months of licensure) occur not only when the restrictions are greatest, but also when parents report the greatest vigilance in supporting the GDL restrictions,” the study said. Focus group parents reported relaxing their supervision over time, and the study showed this easing parallels the lessening in safety improvements as time goes on.

“We’ve always known parents play an important part in safe driving for teens,” said Costales. “In addition to close supervision, we encourage parents to consider an ODOT-approved driver education program in preparing their teen to drive.”

According to the study, graduated driver licensing laws also reduced the number of traffic tickets and crashes by male teen drivers, who typically record more traffic convictions and accidents than their female peers.

“It is extremely promising that after GDL implementation, male crash rates dropped to levels approximating female crash rates. Because young male crash rates are typically higher than female crash rates, a reduction in those crash rates may be an important finding,” the study said.

Regardless of GDL restrictions, the study found that Oregon teens who took an approved ODOT driver education course, in lieu of an additional 50 hours of supervised practice, had fewer crashes, traffic convictions and suspensions.

ODOT-approved driver education programs can be found at www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/drivers_ed.shtml or by contacting Driver Education Program Manager John L. Harvey at 503-986-4413.

The Center for Applied Research conducted the study for NHTSA using focus groups in Oregon and analysis of Oregon teen driving and crash data.

Oregon’s GDL program

Oregon’s GDL program includes the following requirements and restrictions for drivers under 18 years old:

- Drivers must hold an Oregon instruction permit for 6 months prior to applying for a driver’s license.

- Drivers must have at least 50 hours of driving experience while being supervised by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years of age and a valid license for at least three years, plus one of the following:
 1. Completion of a traffic safety course that meets standards developed by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT); or
 2. An additional 50 hours of driving experience for a total of 100 hours of supervised driving with a licensed driver.
- During the first 6 months, a driver may not carry any passenger younger than 20 years of age who is not a member of the driver's immediate family.
- During the second six months, a driver may not carry more than three passengers who are under 20 years of age who are not members of the driver's immediate family.
- During the first year, a driver cannot drive between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m., except a) driving from home and place of employment; b) driving between home and a school event for which no other transportation is available; c) driving for employment purposes; or d) driving with a licensed driver who is at least 25 years of age.
- In addition, Oregon drivers younger than 18 years old are subject to a stricter version of the state's Driver Improvement Program than adults.

For drivers under 18 who get a) two convictions, b) two preventable accidents or c) one of each, DMV will restrict driving privileges for 90 days to drive only for work purposes with no passengers except a parent, stepparent or guardian. These restrictions are in addition to the restrictions placed on a driver in the first year of a provisional license.
- For a third conviction or accident, DMV will suspend the teen's driving privileges for six months even if he or she turns 18 years of age during the suspension period. Each subsequent driver improvement violation or preventable accident will suspend driving privileges or right to apply for driving privileges for six months, regardless of a previous or current Driver Improvement Program suspension(s).

###ODOT###