



NTSB

SAFETY ALERT

National Transportation Safety Board

★ **Young African American Drivers**

Graduated driver licensing laws save lives

The problem

- Automobile crashes are the number one cause of death for African Americans from birth through age 14, and the number two cause of death for African Americans ages 14 through 24.
- Per mile traveled, African American males ages 13-19 are nearly twice as likely to die in a motor vehicle crash than males in general, according to the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Center for Injury Research and Policy.
- All teen drivers represent less than 7 percent of the driving population, yet are involved in more than 13 percent of drivers in fatal crashes. Two-thirds of those passengers killed in single-vehicle crashes when teens were behind the wheel were also between the ages of 15 and 19.
- Learning to drive, especially in today's traffic, is a complex task that requires extensive practice to gain and maintain skills.
- Driver education alone is not sufficient to gain the knowledge and practice necessary. It has been estimated that up to 500 hours of practice is necessary to experience and learn to avoid the risks of driving.

Effective actions to reduce African American teen fatalities

- To save teen lives, the National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that all States require graduated driver licensing.
- Graduated drivers licensing is a comprehensive program requiring young drivers to proceed through a three-stage program consisting of a learner's permit, an intermediate or provisional license, and a full license. To obtain full licensure, a driver must complete the first two stages without any moving violations or at-fault crashes.
- Nighttime driving restrictions, teen passenger restrictions and cell phone use restrictions are also important elements of a comprehensive program.
- Graduated licensing should be viewed as "training wheels" for young drivers. When they gain both experience and expertise, the training wheels are removed.

Graduated driver licensing works

- Every State that has evaluated the effect of graduated license laws has reported substantial reductions in teen fatalities and injuries (both rates and total).
- Studies from nearly a dozen States show that deaths and serious injuries from traffic crashes involving young drivers declined by as much as 58 percent following enactment of graduated licensing provisions (depending upon the provisions of the law).
- Currently, 46 States and the District of Columbia have a comprehensive graduated drivers licensing program; 44 States and the District of Columbia have a nighttime driving restriction, and 34 States and the District of Columbia have teen passenger restrictions.

What can you do?

- Because of the disproportionate effect on African American teens, the Safety Board encourages African American parents, leaders, and the media to push their State legislators to support graduated drivers license programs for teens in all States.
- If your State already has graduated driver licensing, encourage strict enforcement of all of its provisions.
- If your State does not require graduated licensing or require all elements of a comprehensive program, urge your State legislators to act.
- Urge State legislatures to impose and enforce teen licensing programs that include these elements:
 - A minimum 6-month holding period for the learner's permit, during which a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old supervises the permit holder. The permit holder must have at least 50 hours of driving practice with the supervising driver.
 - A minimum 6-month holding period for the intermediate or provisional license, which includes a nighttime driving restriction prohibiting the intermediate or provisional license holder from driving unsupervised at night, particularly between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m. The license holder should also be prohibited from carrying more than one passenger under age 21 unless accompanied by a supervising adult at least 21 years old. The novice driver should be prohibited from using a cell phone or wireless device while driving.
 - For each stage, a minimum period of 6 months without at-fault crashes or traffic violations (and accelerated penalties if the driver has an at-fault crash or traffic violation) before proceeding to the next stage. Mandatory seat belt use and zero tolerance of alcohol use should also be required at each stage.

Need more information?

Visit the NTSB website at www.nts.gov.