

## Young Workers at Risk Behind the Wheel

Minnesota is frequently a leader in national surveys of quality of life and best places to live and work. But recently, we've achieved a highly negative distinction — posting the highest percentage of teens behind the wheel in fatal crashes in the nation, for the years 2004 - 2006. During those years, teen drivers were involved in 18.4 percent of deadly crashes in Minnesota, compared to the national average of 14.3 percent.



Overall crash involvement is inordinately high among young drivers right up through the mid-twenties. In 2006, 15 - 24-year-olds made up 16 percent of licensed drivers, but accounted for 28 percent of crash-involved drivers. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among Minnesota's teens and young adults.

Many consider Minnesota's relatively weak graduated driver licensing law to be a factor. As we went to print, a bill to strengthen the law — tightening nighttime driving and number of passengers allowed, among other restrictions — was under consideration in the legislature.

As an employer, what can you do? Incorporate messages and materials that address young driver issues into your traffic safety efforts, both for the benefit of younger employees and workers who are parents of young drivers.

### The top six driving risk factors for teens are:

- Failure to wear a seat belt
- Inattentiveness
- Excessive speed. Teens particularly have difficulty adjusting speed to driving conditions.

- Fatigue. A person who has been awake for 24 hours experiences impairment nearly equal to a blood alcohol concentration of .10 percent. Teens often don't get enough sleep.

- Driving at night. Mile for mile, 16 and 17-year-olds are about three times more likely to be involved in a fatal car crash at night than during the day.

- Driving with other teens. The presence of teen passengers strongly increases the risk of crashing. For teen drivers, the more passengers the greater the risk.

Parents should be firm about choosing vehicles for safety, not image. They can require seat belt use at all times, prohibit driving when excessively tired, and as drivers themselves, set a good example. Parents can set a limit on the number of passengers in the car, especially multiple teens. They should expose teens to different driving conditions and different types of roadways, practicing with them throughout their first year of licensed driving. They should also discuss the dangers and legal consequences of driving impaired.

*For more information, see*

**Young driver resources/programs at:** [www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/traffic/youngdrivers.cfm](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/traffic/youngdrivers.cfm)

**Educational materials for employees at:** [www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/nets/N-res.cfm](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/nets/N-res.cfm)

**Traffic safety fact sheets at:** [www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/facts/category.cfm?CID=2](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/facts/category.cfm?CID=2)

**Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety Teen Driver Page at:** [www.dps.state.mn.us/ots/teens/default.asp](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/ots/teens/default.asp)

Minnesota law enforcement agencies will participate in a nationwide "Click It or Ticket" education and enforcement campaign from May 19 - June 1. This is a great opportunity to piggyback your seat belt efforts onto a high profile campaign. The poster on the next page can be copied and posted. For more information about seat belt programs, contact Lisa Kons at 651-228-7330/800-444-9150; [kons@minnesotasafetycouncil.org](mailto:kons@minnesotasafetycouncil.org).

# Safety NETS

Information To Help Keep You Safe on the Road

## “Click It or Ticket,” May 19 - June 1

Campaign will boost seat belt use — and save lives

# DAY & NITE.



**BUCKLE UP OR PAY UP.**



- More than eight out of ten Minnesotans buckle up
- Wearing your seat belt on every trip is the single most effective way to protect yourself from being killed in a traffic crash
- In frontal crashes, seat belts increase your chance of survival by 45% in a car and 60% in a light truck
- With no seat belt, the impact of a 35 m.p.h. crash is the equivalent of falling from a third-story window
- Buckle up — everybody, every seat, every time

