

What is the goal of the Driving Skills for Life Safe Teen Driving program?

Driving Skills for Life Teen Driving aims to reduce the number of car crashes and save lives of teenagers driving on SA's roadways through education and awareness of risky driving behaviour. The program also targets parents, educators, businesses, and law enforcement as key players in influencing teens to drive safely and responsibly.

How serious is the problem of risky teen driving behaviour?

The following statistics underscore the severity and the consequences of unsafe teen driving:

- Car crashes are the leading cause of death among 16-19 year olds in the US .
- The economic impact of police-reported fatal car crashes involving drivers in SA was R 53 Billion
- In 2006, 12,711 teenagers died in the U.S. from injuries sustained in car crashes.
- In Virginia in 2006, there were 126 fatal car crashes involving teens, according to data from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.

Why are crash rates so high for teens?

A number of factors contribute to high crash rates among teen drivers:

- Teens lack the psychological and physiological maturity to safely manage risk and hazardous driving conditions.
- Teens are taught to drive under optimal conditions and don't have experience with potentially hazardous situations.
- Teens are at a life stage in which they believe they are invincible (the "it won't happen to me" mindset), and are more likely than older drivers to underestimate dangerous situations.
- Teens are attracted to risk and are less likely to take safety precautions, such as wearing seatbelts.

What are the leading causes of car crashes among teens?

According to the American National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the leading causes of car crashes involving teens include:

- Driver inexperience,
- Risk-taking behaviour,
- High-risk situations (e.g., inclement weather, night driving),
- Alcohol and drug use, and
- Not wearing a safety belt.

Distractions in the car - such as cell phones, music, and passengers - also contribute significantly to car crashes involving teens.

What are SA's policies for teen drivers?

Legislation only provides for a minimum age requirement for obtaining

- A learners licence at 17
- Full drivers licence no sooner than 18 years
- AARTO legislations regarding demerit system

Are driver's education programs in high schools effective at improving driving behaviour?

High school driver education programs, where such exist, can teach driving skills and raise awareness about the consequences of major risks, such as drinking and driving. However, these programs appear to have little affect on changing teen drivers' attitudes - and attitudes are strong indicators of how driving skills are actually employed. To effectively change attitudes and reduce risky behaviour among teen drivers, education needs to be combined with training as well as parent and community involvement and ongoing behind-the-wheel supervision.

Which cars are safest for young drivers?

While parents may be inclined to choose a new vehicle which is basic or a 2nd hand vehicle for their teen driver, teens are actually safest in larger cars with low centres of gravity, small engines, and air bags. The vehicle best equipped with active and passive safety features should be high on the option list

How can parents, educators, and businesses help reduce teen-related car crashes and fatalities?

You can help keep teens safe on the road in two easy and important ways. First, talk to teens you know about the consequences of unsafe driving. Remind them to focus forward, buckle up, and slow down. Secondly, act as a role model for their driving behaviour. Teens are looking to you, literally, for guidance on how to act while driving. When driving with a teen passenger, minimize distractions, don't talk on your cell phone, and keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.

In addition, you can improve teen driver safety by:

- Limiting teen drivers' unsupervised exposure to risky situations, such as dangerous weather conditions and night driving.
- Restricting the number of passengers allowed in the car with the teen driver.
- According to research in the US , curfews are proven to reduce crashes among teen drivers.
- Understanding and supporting teen licensing laws.

What is SA's policy on underage drinking and driving?

Underage drinking (18yrs) is prohibited. Legally the BAC is .05 but it is highly recommended that drivers do not drink and drive

How serious is the teenage motor vehicle crash problem?

In 2006, 12,711 teenagers age 15 to 19 died in the United States from injuries in motor vehicle crashes. The crash risk is particularly high during the first years in which teenagers are eligible for driver's licenses. Thirty-six percent of all deaths of 16- to 19-year-olds from all causes are related to motor vehicle crashes. (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)

Do teenagers require more sleep than adults?

Yes, teenagers need more sleep than younger children and adults. Many teenagers need at least 9 hours of sleep each night. But most of them get less than 6.5 hours of sleep each night. (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

What is the most effective step to take when becoming sleepy when driving?

The most effective step when becoming sleepy while driving is to stop driving. If there is no other choice, consume the equivalent of two cups of coffee, take a nap, or call for a lift. (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

What factors contribute to motor vehicle crashes involving young drivers?

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, most crashes involving young drivers result from inexperience, risk-taking behaviour, high-risk situations, alcohol use, illegal drug use, and not wearing a safety belt. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

Why is so much attention focused on young drivers?

A significant percentage of young drivers are involved in traffic crashes and they are twice as likely as adult drivers to be in a fatal crash. Sixteen-year-old drivers have crash rates that are three times those of 17-year-olds, five times those of 18-year-olds, and twice those of 85-year-olds. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)