

## **NEW DRIVERS**

### **2006 STUDY SHOWS DRIVING RESTRICTIONS HELP TO REDUCE TEENAGE DRIVERS' DEATHS**

**BILL SEYMOUR:** Welcome to DMV Infocast, an audio production of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. This is Bill Seymour, Infocast Editor.

Laws that set numerous strict conditions before teenagers can get a license can reduce fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers by up to 21% public health researchers say according to an Associated Press Report on the study, which was released in early July 2006.

The more restrictions imposed, the greater the reduction the study said. Examples include a waiting period before a young driver is able to move from a learner's permit to an intermediate license. Restrictions on driving at night, having required hours of supervisions by an adult driver, and limits on the number of passengers a teenage driver can have. States with such restrictions as part of strong graduated licensing programs showed declines in fatal crashes involving 16-year-olds according to the study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University.

Connecticut has numerous restrictions that apply to teenagers holding permits as well as newly licensed 16 and 17-year-old drivers. These include a minimum number of hours on the road and classroom training, a passenger restriction law, and a restriction on nighttime driving.

Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers. Federal figures show that 16-year-old drivers were involved in 957 crashes that killed 1,111 people in 2004. Those crashes resulted in the deaths of 399 16-year-old drivers and 385 16-year-old passengers.

States put limits on new drivers, but the rules vary. Researchers said that by the end of 2004, 41 states and the District of Columbia had such programs. Studies found that such programs reduce the fatal crashes for 16-year-olds by the average of 11%. When

researchers compared states with program components to states without a program, they found 18% reduction in fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers.

The tougher the restrictions, the greater the reductions in teenage fatalities. Nicole Nassan, the head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, said the study strongly underscores the effectiveness of graduated licensing laws to states searching for solutions to the tragic problem of fatal crashes involving teenagers. It provides extremely valuable new information, she said.

Researchers used data from 1994 through 2004 collected by the agency and the Census Bureau. They evaluated graduated licensing programs and fatal crashes in 36 states with the licensing programs and 7 without the restrictions.

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