

Talking Points

Designation of “Talk to Teen Drivers” night

2:30 PM, March 25, 2008

Manchester High School

- Thank you for being here today to mark an important day next month that could have a lasting influence on the safety of our youngest drivers.
- Over the last 12 months, we have seen too many needless tragedies across our state involving fatal accidents of teen drivers.
- Car accidents are the leading cause of death among teenagers in our nation. But, it doesn't have to be.
- When these accidents occur, these horrific tragedies have a ripple effect that leave families, communities and schools, struggling to recover.
- One death is too many.
- That's why I have designated Thursday, April 17th, 2008, as “Talk To Teen Drivers” Night in Connecticut.
- T-A-L-K stands for: Teach Accountability, Laws and Knowledge about safety.
- I am urging parents of teenagers to reach out to their children and have a candid discussion about the responsibility of driving.
- It could be a life-saving chat.

- No parent should ever have to endure that phone call from the police, or that unexpected knock at the door, to inform them that their child is not coming home.
- Certainly, our thoughts and prayers are with all the families that have suffered such a loss.
- But, April 17th can serve as a reminder for parents.
- Parents -- you have a choice.
- You can have that conversation with your teen driver or soon-to-be teen driver. But more importantly, you have the influence. Your words, your actions, and your insight can have a lasting influence on your child.
- To help spread the word about “Talk To Teen Drivers” night, tomorrow we will be launching a public service announcement on radio stations throughout the state.
- The message is clear – parents have the power to make a difference.
- As a parent, I can recall those first days when my teens began driving.
- It was nerve-racking, and frankly, downright frightening.
- Teens are inexperienced drivers. Teens are young and believe they are invincible.
- Sadly, we know they are not.
- But, as a parent, you can make a difference.

- There are many things you can do to prepare yourself for educating your teen.
- Be proactive in enforcing the laws at home before the police do on the road.
- Know the laws. For example, we have teen driving restrictions – passenger restrictions for newly licensed teens and curfews for all 16 and 17-year-olds. Know them.
- They can be found at the DMV web site – ct.gov/dmv .
- Talk about speeding - it is a serious cause of teen driving accidents.
- Insist on them always wearing a seat belt.
- Remind them of the perils of distracted driving
- When driving with your teen, take a second or two to explain some of the ways to be a safe driver.
- Design a parent-teen driving contract or use the one featured on the DMV web site.
- All of these points and more can all go a long way to making that conversation with your teen meaningful and your teen's next trip in the car a safer one.
- Laws can only do so much. So, most of all parents, be a parent. Be your child's role model. Hold firm on any rules you set with your teen driver.

- The designation of April 17th is one of several things currently underway to make teen driving safer in Connecticut.
- Last November, I created a task force to examine laws, analyze the many angles of the teen driving issue and raise awareness of this critical issue.
- I asked the task force to come up with recommendations to better address this issue. They did so.
- As part of my legislative package, I have incorporated the task force's recommendations and proposed tougher laws to help increase the safety of our teens on the road.
- Proposals such as rolling back curfew times for certain teen drivers, increasing training requirements, implementing stiffer penalties for certain moving violations, including driving under the influence, are now before the state legislature.
- In addition, I have asked high schools across our state to hold assemblies on safe driving practices, passenger restriction laws and other issues relating teen drivers.
- The April 17 Talk To Teen Drivers Night is about the significant influence a parent can have on their child.
- That conversation can make all the difference in the world when it comes to your teen's safety.
- I thank you all for being here today and I thank you all for helping me to raise awareness and spread the word about this important topic.