

TEENS BEHIND THE WHEEL

A
Roadmap
For
Parents



Kelly Phillips — A Unique Teen, a Common Tragedy

More than 100 friends of Kelly Phillips waited at the Hennepin County Medical Center on September 21, 2007 — the night she was involved in a crash that resulted in her death. The Minnetonka High School senior was riding with her friend Kylie to a bonfire to meet up with friends. About a half mile away, the vehicle went off the road at a curve and rolled — ejecting Kelly and killing Kylie. According to the Minnesota State Patrol crash investigation, Kylie was either texting or using an iPod just prior to the crash.

Kelly died a day later. Kylie's cousin, who was wearing a seat belt, survived.

Kelly's parents say she always wore a seat belt — but because of a last-minute change of plans, Kelly was riding in the back seat of a vehicle that lacked working seat belts.

"I am sure she was uncomfortable riding without a belt, but she probably figured one ride wouldn't kill her," says her father, Dan. "Everyone knew how responsible Kelly was — she never drank, and always wore a seat belt.



It seemed like Kelly would be the last person to be killed like this."

This violent crash that claimed the lives of two teens reveals common themes reported in many traffic crashes involving teenagers: multiple teen passengers, other distractions, nighttime driving and seat belt non-use.

Kelly's father says she connected with everyone and touched many hearts — her teachers, fellow students, kids she counseled at camp and her church community. Kelly, a national honor society student and an athlete, had been working on college applications prior to the crash.

Today, Kelly's parents have a foundation in her name and they plan to speak to parents and teens about the importance of safe driving habits and eliminating driver distractions.

This publication intends to help parents develop safer teen drivers in order to prevent future tragedies from occurring on Minnesota roads.

Traffic Crashes: #1 Killer of Minnesota Teens



Each year in Minnesota, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among 16 and 17 year olds — eclipsing the combined death total of teen suicides, homicides, cancer and other accidents.

The reason for the high death count is simple: driver inexperience and immaturity that often results in risk-taking behind the wheel.

Top Driving Risk Factors for Teens

■ Failure to wear seat belts

Teens have the lowest seat belt use rate of all motorists. When motorists don't buckle up, chances of surviving a crash are cut in half. Each year, more than half of Minnesota teens killed are not belted.

Minnesota's primary seat belt law requires drivers and all passengers to be belted or in the correct child restraint. Law enforcement will stop and ticket unbelted drivers or passengers.

■ Inattentiveness/Driving with other teens

Driver inattention/distraction is the most common contributing factor in multiple-vehicle crashes. Teen passengers significantly increase the risk of a crash.

Each year, 64 percent of fatal crashes involving a teen driver had passengers present in the teen driver's vehicle.

■ Driving at night

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

■ Excessive speed

Illegal/unsafe speed is the most common contributing factor in single-vehicle crashes. Teen drivers have difficulty judging safe speeds and adjusting their speed to driving conditions.

■ Fatigue

A person who has been awake for 24 hours experiences impairment nearly equal to an alcohol-concentration level of 0.10 percent.

Minnesota's Teen Driver Licensing System

Minnesota's Graduated Licensing (GDL) law allows novice drivers to build experience incrementally by requiring more supervision in the initial learning driving phases. GDL also reduces exposure to high-risk situations such as carrying teen passengers and night-time driving. Research has proven that parental influences and controls are clearly effective in making teens safer drivers.

Stage 1 Instruction Permit

- Must be at least 15 years old.
- Must have completed 30 hours of classroom training and be enrolled in behind-the-wheel training with an approved driver education program.
- Must pass the state knowledge test.
- Permit holder may drive under the supervision of a parent, guardian or other licensed driver 21 or older occupying the front passenger seat.
- Drivers and all passengers must wear seat belts or be in the correct child safety restraint.
- May not operate a vehicle while using a cell phone, whether hand-held or hands-free except to call 911 in an emergency.

Stage 2 Provisional License

- Must be at least 16, complete six hours of behind-the-wheel training and pass the road test.
- Must have held a permit for six months with no convictions for moving violations, or for impaired driving violations.
- Parent/guardian must certify completion of at least 30 hours of supervised driving, including a minimum of 10 hours of night driving.

- For the first six months of licensure driving is prohibited from midnight to 5 a.m. unless: accompanied by a licensed driver age 25 or older; driving for employment; driving between home and place of employment; or driving to/from home and a school event for which the school has not provided transportation.
- For the first six months of licensure only one passenger under the age of 20 is permitted, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Passengers under age 20 who are members of the driver's immediate family are permitted.
- For the second six months of licensure no more than three passengers under the age of 20 are permitted, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Passengers under age 20 who are members of the driver's immediate family are permitted.
- Drivers and all passengers must wear seat belts or be in the correct child safety restraint.
- May not operate a vehicle while using a cell phone, whether hand-held or hands-free except to call 911 in an emergency.

Stage 3 Full License

- Parent must certify completion of at least 10 additional hours of supervised driving.
- Must have held a provisional license for at least 12 consecutive months with no convictions for impaired driving or crash-related moving violations, and not have more than one conviction for a non-crash related moving violation.

Parents: Know the Laws — and Your Role

Teen Driving Laws

Seat Belts

- Minnesota's seat belt law is a primary offense, meaning drivers and passengers in all seating positions must be buckled up or in the correct child restraint. Law enforcement will stop and ticket unbelted drivers or passengers.

Cell Phone Use and Texting

- It is illegal for drivers under age 18 to use a cell phone whether hand-held or hands-free — except to call 911 in an emergency. It is also illegal for drivers of all ages to compose or read text messages and emails, or access the Internet using a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic.

Drinking

- It is illegal for a person under age 21 to drive after consuming any amount of alcohol. Drivers under the legal drinking age with an alcohol-concentration of 0.08 or higher will face regular DWI laws and sanctions.

Consequences for underage drinking and driving are loss of license for at least 30 days and court fines. Teen drivers with provisional licenses whose driving privileges are revoked from a crash or alcohol/controlled substance-related violation cannot regain driving privileges until age 18.

Parents: Know Your Role

Developing necessary skills for safe driving is a complex task and requires many hours of practice in a variety of driving environments. Driver education is a first step, but a parent's role is crucial:

- Require seat belt use at all times.
- Be a positive role model when you drive.
- Review the Minnesota Driver's Manual to refresh your own driving knowledge.
- Practice with your teen while they have their instruction permit and during their first year of licensed driving.
- Begin practice driving in an empty parking lot.
- Give positive feedback frequently and remain calm while instructing your teen.
- Practice on roads unfamiliar to the teen.
- As experience is gained, expose teen to different driving conditions — wet roads, snow, freeways, rural roadways, night driving, etc. Continue to monitor and train teen driver even after licensure.
- Set reasonable limits when your teen is licensed, stick to the rules, and follow through with consequences when the rules are not followed.
- Choose vehicles for safety, not image.
- Always make safety the priority over mobility and convenience issues.
- Discuss the dangers and consequences of fatigued and impaired driving.

Driving Skills Checklist

Student Driver	Never	Sometimes	Always
1. Knows location of gauges and safety devices and checks them before driving			
2. Adjusts seat, mirrors and seat belt			
3. Always wears seat belt			
4. Judges and maintains a safe following distance (three seconds) <i>Count "1 - 1000, 2 - 1000, 3 - 1000" between the time the back of a car in front of you passes a stationary object and the time the front of your car reaches the same spot.</i>			
5. Demonstrates ability to back straight and turn while backing			
6. Is aware of other drivers' blind spots, especially large trucks			
7. Checks mirrors and blind spot (by looking over shoulder) before changing lanes			
8. Is aware of tailgaters and safely manages their own driving behaviors			
9. Anticipates and reacts properly to changing traffic lights			
10. Checks mirrors frequently			
11. Signals properly in advance of turns and lane changes			
12. Anticipates braking situations in time to avoid an emergency braking situation			
13. Appears relaxed and comfortable, yet alert and aware when driving			
14. Is comfortable driving at night			
15. Uses high and low beam headlights correctly			
16. Demonstrates ability to safely control vehicle on a variety of road conditions: wet, snowy, icy			
17. Is aware of and properly yields right-of-way to pedestrians			
18. Demonstrates smooth braking and acceleration techniques			
19. Demonstrates smooth movements and coordination while turning			
20. Demonstrates proper staging and yielding during unprotected left turns involving oncoming traffic			
21. Demonstrates ability to identify and interpret road signs			
22. Properly assesses intersections and right-of-way (<i>no longer asks, "Is it OK to go?"</i>)			
23. Demonstrates ability to safely merge onto and exit from freeways			
24. Demonstrates ability to maintain focus on driving tasks at all times.			

Recommended Routes for Safety

Responsibilities

Teens are responsible for their actions as a driver. As vehicle owners, parents are legally liable for damages caused by their teen driver. Until age 18, parents may legally

withdraw consent of their teen's provisional license, canceling their driving privileges. Visit www.mndriveinfo.org for additional information.

Establishing Rules for Newly Licensed Teens

Take time to discuss driving rules, responsibilities and consequences that are appropriate for your family. A natural strategy for mentoring new drivers includes a combination of privileges and consequences. Safety should always take priority over mobility and convenience issues.

If a crash occurs that is due to inexperience, the most effective response is to review driving privileges and increase practice time until skills are mastered.

Discussing consequences may be viewed negatively by teens and parents alike. However, teens who are involved in the rule-making process may be more likely to honor an agreement. If your teen makes choices that violate the driving agreement and are

high risk in nature, the recommended response is to restrict privileges. Some parents find a written contract enhances the agreement.

As teen drivers gain experience and demonstrate appropriate decision making, they graduate to a higher level of driving responsibility. Studies show that a driver's greatest risk of crashing and receiving citations occurs during the first year of licensure.

Remember, it is a violation of state law for drivers with a learning permit or provisional license to use a cell phone while driving. It is also illegal for drivers of all ages to compose, read, or send text messages and emails, or access the internet on a wireless device while driving.

Recommended Limitations for Newly Licensed Teens

To further reduce the risk of teen crashes, consider these safety steps in addition to the laws listed on page 3.

Step 1

- Daylight conditions only.
- Low-stress conditions (low traffic volume and good road conditions).
- No passengers under age 20 (except immediate family members).

Step 2

- Limited nighttime driving with a curfew.
- Moderate-stress conditions (moderate traffic volume and various road conditions).
- No more than one passenger under age 20 (except immediate family members).

Step 3

- Nighttime driving with no more than one passenger under age 20 (except immediate family members).
- No more than three passengers under age 20, except immediate family members, only if licensed more than six months.

Step 4

- All road and traffic conditions allowed.
- Maintain passenger limitations.

Step 5

- Unrestricted privileges to drive.

Driving Contract Between Teen and Parent

As a new driver I promise to:

1. Always wear my seat belt and require all passengers to do so
2. Never drive after consuming alcohol or drugs
3. Be a passenger only with drivers who are alcohol- and drug-free
4. Always call for a ride if it's not safe to drive or ride
5. Be a courteous driver
6. Call if I will be more than _____ minutes late
7. Drive at safe speeds for road conditions — at or below the speed limit
8. Never engage in racing, stunts, or other thrill-seeking activities
9. Not conceal tickets, warnings, or crashes
10. Not drive when fatigued
11. Never use a cell phone or other electronic device when driving
12. Not drive aggressively, tailgate, or speed up to get through yellow lights
13. Not allow anyone else to drive the car
14. Abide by passenger and night driving provisions
15. Other: _____

As your parent/guardian I promise to:

1. Be available for practice on a variety of road types and driving conditions
2. Be available to pick you up if it's not safe for you to drive or ride
3. Other: _____

Driving Contract Between Teen and Parent

The Following Provisions Are Agreed Upon:

These Provisions Should be Periodically Reviewed.

Number of passengers under age 20 allowed during first year of licensure:

Months 1-6 None One*

Months 7-12 None One Two Three*

After one year of licensure None One Two Three

*Maximum allowed by law

Extra passengers will not be allowed if seat belts are not available for each person.

Nighttime driving limitations during the first year of licensure:

Months 1-6, no driving from

Midnight to 5 a.m. _____ p.m. or dark to 5 a.m.
(as required by law) (use this option to extend the nighttime driving limitation)

Months 7-12, no driving from

Midnight to 5 a.m. _____ p.m. or dark to 5 a.m. _____ to _____

Road conditions:

Good weather All weather Low-traffic volume High-traffic volume

Teen's signature

Date

Parent's signature

Date

Further Information



For more information on teen drivers, visit the Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety website at www.dps.state.mn.us/ots.

Visit the Minnesota Driver and Vehicle Services Division website at www.mndriveinfo.org for information on:

- Driver exam station locations and hours of operation
- List of approved driver education schools
- Locations to apply for or renew a driver's license
- Minnesota Driver's Manual
- Scheduling a road test appointment
- Withdrawal of Parent Consent/Voluntary Surrender Form



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