

What's killing our teens? Survey looks at factors in car crashes

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, State Farm join forces to address the issue

In a new national survey released Thursday, 5,665 high school students said they are driving under extremely dangerous conditions -- fatigue, talking on cell phones, strong emotions, multiple passengers -- and many are still not wearing seatbelts. The National Teen Driver Survey, released by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm, represents 10.6 million 9th, 10th and 11th grade students in all public high schools in the United States.

"Research has told us a lot about which teens get into crashes, but we don't know enough about the why," says Flaura K. Winston, M.D., Ph.D., co-scientific director and founder of the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and principal investigator of the National Teen Driver study. "With this survey, we asked teens directly: what is happening when your peers drive that is making them unsafe?"

Key findings about the teen experience in cars shows:

75 percent of teens see peers driving fatigued 90 percent see passenger behavior that distracts the driver 20 percent of 11th graders report being in a crash as a driver in the past year

The survey also revealed the important role that the teens see for their parents:

66 percent say that they care about their parents' opinion on cell phone use while driving 56 percent of them rely on parents to learn how to drive 39 percent of their parents provide total financial responsibility for their driving

"Teens described a driving environment that would be challenging even to experienced drivers," says Winston. "Combine this driving environment with lack of training and inexperience and you have a deadly mix."

In 2005, almost 7,500 15-to 20-year-old drivers were involved in fatal crashes according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The fatality rate for drivers aged 16 to 19 years, based on miles driven, is four times that of drivers aged 25 to 69 years.

"Our aim is to help young drivers make safe decisions," says Laurette Stiles, Vice President Strategic Resources at State Farm. "We want to give them tools to help them avoid hazards and ultimately to save lives and make our roads safer for all."

The National Teen Driver Survey is the first phase of a multidisciplinary initiative of research, education and programmatic interventions that can be implemented nationally to save lives. Under an existing alliance between The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm, this initiative is dedicated to taking research results and translating them into nationwide action to save teen's lives. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm have a proven track record in conducting research and implementing programming that have helped reduce injuries and fatalities to children in motor vehicle crashes through Partners for Child Passenger Safety.

Parents and teens can learn more about the latest research and recommendations on safe driving for teens at <http://www.chop.edu/youngdrivers> and <http://www.statefarm.com/>.

What's killing our teens? Survey looks at factors in car crashes by Bend Weekly News Sources