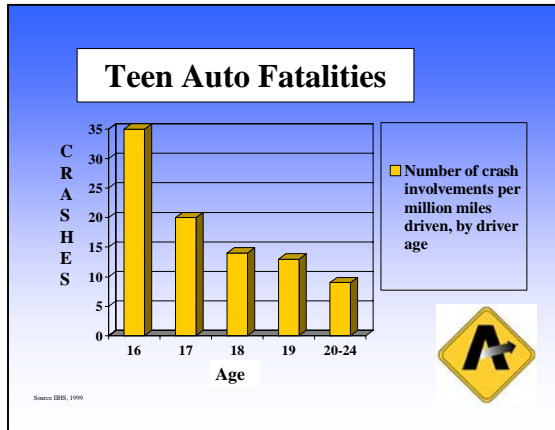


Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) and Teen Drivers: Nighttime Restrictions

Teen drivers are far more likely than other drivers to be involved in fatal motor vehicle crashes because they lack driving experience and tend to take greater risks due to their immaturity. GDL provides a structure in which beginning drivers gain substantial driving experience in less-risky situations and has proven to be effective in reducing young driver crash fatalities. One component within GDL is to restrict unsupervised driving at night.

THE STATISTICS



Currently only 44 states have a three stage Graduated Driver Licensing program. Of those states, only eight states have an optimal nighttime restriction provision (9 or 10pm to 5am).

The per mile fatal crash rate of 16 year old male drivers is four times greater at night than during the day. Williams AF. "Nighttime driving and fatal crash involvement of teenagers". *Accid Anal Prev* 1985; 17:1-5

Nighttime crashes are a problem for young drivers for a variety of reasons. Teenagers often engage in risk taking behaviors at night and may less often be adult supervised. Farrow JA. "Young driver risk taking: a description of dangerous driving situations among 16- to 19-year-old drivers. *Int J Addict* 1987; 22:1255-67.

Relative to daytime driving (6am to 7:59pm), both males and females show higher risk of crash between the hours of 8pm and 5:59am. The same study showed that while there was little elevation of risk during the hours of 4pm and 10pm, after 10pm risk increases with advancing nighttime hours. Male drivers experience a larger increase in crash risk during nighttime categories than female drivers. Rice TM. "Nighttime driving, passenger transport, and injury crash rates of young drivers". *Inj Prev* 2003; 9:245-250.

Late night driving increases crash risk among young drivers for a variety of reasons: the driving task is more difficult in darkness; many newly licensed drivers will have had less driving practice at night than during the day; fatigue – thought to be a problem for teenagers at all times of the day – may be more of a factor at night; and recreational driving that is considered to be high risk, sometimes involving alcohol use, is more likely to take place at night. Williams AF. "Teenage Drivers: Patterns of risk". *Journal of Safety Research* 2003; 34:5-15.

In a survey asking teenagers to describe their dangerous driving incidents during the past 6 months ("If a cop had been there, you probably would have been stopped"), teens reported that the majority of such incidents took place after 10pm. Farrow, J. A. (1987).

Fatal crash rates are higher at all times of the day for 16-year-olds than for older drivers, but in any given mile driven, teens are twice as likely to crash at night (9pm to 6am) as during the day. Sixty percent of young teens' nighttime crashes occur before midnight. IIHS, *Fatality Facts 2003: Teenagers*

States with nighttime driving restrictions show crash reductions of up to 60 percent during restricted hours. NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts, 2006*

In a review of data from 47 states over a 10-year period, a nighttime restriction on 15- to 17-year-old drivers reduced multiple-vehicle driver fatality rates by about 28% and single-vehicle rates by about 25%. National Safety Council, *Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety, 2005*

While only 15% of teen drivers' miles occur at night, 40% of their fatal crashes take place during this time. National Safety Council, *Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety, 2005*



COMMON MYTHS

Even though 44 states have a three stage GDL program, not one state has the four components advocated for by groups like the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the National Transportation Safety Board. These components include: Six month holding period provision for a learner's permit, at least 30 hours of supervised behind-the-wheel training with an adult licensed driver during the learner's permit stage, a passenger restriction that limits the number of teenage passengers during the intermediate stage, and a nighttime restriction that limits unsupervised driving from the hours of 9 or 10pm to 5am during the intermediate stage of GDL. Despite the proven success of GDL programs, many still have concerns about the restrictions they impose. Below are some common myths regarding nighttime restrictions.

Myth #1: Restricting nighttime driving to as early as 9pm is overly disruptive to families lifestyles.

Counterpoint #1: Numerous studies point to the fact that the majority of nighttime crashes occur between the hours of 9pm and midnight. Every state that has implemented a nighttime driving restriction has exempted certain activities relating to school activities and jobs during restricted hours.

Myth #2: Enforcement of nighttime restrictions is overly burdensome on law enforcement agencies.

Counterpoint #2: Passage of this legislation is not meant to be solely a directive for law enforcement to beef up efforts towards teen drivers. Successful implementations of GDL programs have always included parental involvement and broad education efforts (media, nonprofit groups, driving instructors, printed materials, etc.) Nighttime restrictions are also one of the easiest components of GDL to enforce, much like curfews are.

Myth #3: Our state already has a GDL program that works just fine.

Counterpoint #3: Unfortunately, not one state in the nation has every component of an optimal GDL program. While many states over the years have implemented some form of GDL, the available and ongoing research validates the need for both nighttime and passenger restrictions, for which very few states have. A June 2006 study by Johns Hopkins University found that those states with comprehensive GDL programs that included nighttime and passenger restrictions showed up to a 20% decrease in fatalities amongst 16-year-old drivers.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Baker, S., *National Evaluation of Graduated Driver Licensing Programs*, Johns Hopkins University, June 2006
<http://tinyurl.com/gad6x>

Mayhew, D., *Reducing the Crash Risk for Young Drivers*, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, June 2006
www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/ReducingTeenCrashes.pdf

National Safety Council, *Graduated Driver Licensing Symposium: The Collection of Papers*, 2003
www.nsc.org/gdlsym/index.htm

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
www.saferoads.org

